INDIAN MOTHER GODDESS

N. N. BHATTACHARYYA

Centre of Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History and Culture
Calcutta University

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CONTENTS

Preface iii

Ch. 1 Introduction 3

Ch. 2. Earth and Woman 15

- Womanly conditions attributed to the Earth 15
- The Earth Goddesses 18
- Cybele and Demeter 20
- Earth Goddess of Harappa Culture 21
- Earth : Vedic & Post-Vedic conceptions 23
- Earth in Rituals 25
- The Harvest Festivals 28
- Original Character of the Śākta Devī 30

Ch. 3 Two Aspects of the Same Mystery 33

- Liṅga and Yoni 33
- Sacred Prostitution 37
- Vāmadevya Sāman 39
- The Priest and the Queen 41
- Pūrṇakumbha : The Womb 42

Ch. 4 The Mothers : Forms of the Cult 44

- The Protectress of Children 44
- The City Goddesses 47
- Local Legends of Mariamma 50
- The Goddess and the Animal World 51
- The Blood-thirsty Goddesses 54
- The Tribal Divinities 56
- Lady of the Mountain 61
- The War Goddesses 62

Ch. 5 Mother Right 65

- Anthropologists on Mother-right 65
- The Class Outlook 68
- The Economic Perspective 70
- The Sacred Queen 73
- Evidence of the Ancient Civilizations 76
- The Women's Kingdom in India 80
- Vestiges of Mother-right in India 81
- Indian Marriage and Matriarchal Tradition 86
- The *strī-ācāra* of Bengal 89
- Pāṇḍavas or Kaunteyas 90

The Popular Influence 91
Matriarchal Origin of the Sāṅkhya Philosophy 92
Mother-right and the Tantra 94

Ch. 6 The Two Currents 98

The Asuras 99
The Vṛtra Myth 101
Goddesses in the Vedas 103
Indra and the Śiśna-devas 107
Non-Vedic Origin of Sāṅkhya 109

Ch. 7 The Changing Phases 115

Mother Goddess in Pre-agricultural Societies 115
Growth of Class-societies 119
Impact of Class-society on Religion 121
The Aśvamedha 124
The New Religious Movements 127

Bibliography 133

Index

To
D. C. Sircar

PREFACE

The study of the Mother Goddess cult in itself is of no value unless it is used as a means to understand the enormously complicated problems of Indian social history. In this sense, the present work is a departure from the traditional line of Indological researches. The precise nature of the social institutions of the ancient Indians is a question which the internal evidence is in itself. too fragmentary to solve. The internal evidence must therefore be studied in the light of what is known of the surviving tribal institutions in general. This is the reason behind my selection for study of the Mother Goddess cult.

The present volume consists of a portion of my D. Phil. thesis prepared under the supervision of Prof. D. C. Sircar. As an antiquarian Prof. Sircar is now practically peerless, but what strikes me with wonder is that, although he did not subscribe to many of my views, he made no attempt to impose his own. This type of academic broadness is rarely found among Indian scholars. Another reason for which I am ever grateful to him is that, while supervising the work, he really taught me how to write. His *Śākta Pīṭhas*, one of the basic works on the Mother Goddess cult, had been of immense help to me.

I am also deeply indebted to my esteemed friend Prof. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya whose works introduced me with those of Frazer, Briffault and Thomson and helped me to view history in a new angle. Twelve years ago, I read his *Lokāyata Darśana* in Bengali. At that time I never dreamt of working on Mother Goddess, but that book made my conceptions clear and later became a strong basis of my work. Other books of Chattopadhyaya, including the English version of the former, I have used profitably to develop my ideas.

My thanks are also due to Sri Ramakrishna Maitra, Prof. Mrinalkanti Gangopadhyaya and Prof. Haridas Sinharay for their help in the matter of printing, to Sri Dilip Kr. Chakraborty for supplying me some useful data, to Dr. J. Maitra for helping me in making the index and finally to Dr. D. R. Das and my wife Manjula for for their constant help in various ways during the period of my research.

The principal aim of the present work, as I have stated above, is to throw new light on the forgotten chapters of Indian social life on the basis of the Mother Goddess cult which has strongly characterised the social fabric of India—ancient, medieval and modern. The post-Mauryan streams of the ancient Mother Goddess cult giving rise to Śāktism as a specialised religious system, the historical development of the Śākta religion up to the modern times, its regional distribution in art and literature, etc., will be comprehensively dealt with in another book of mine entitled *History of the Śākta Religion*.

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Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya

INDIAN MOTHER GODDESS

N. N. Bhattacharyya

IMG. 1

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The material mode of life of a people ordinarily provides the rationale for the type of deity and the manner of worship prevalent in a given society. In a hunting society a special relationship generally develops between man and animal which leads its members to perform certain rites, religious or magical, to ensure the prey in the next hunting expedition, or for other related ends. "Before the adoption of agriculture and herding, when a precarious existence was eked out on the chase and edible fruits, roots and berries, the animal and vegetable species which formed his staple diet acquired a sacred character and significance. With this he endeavoured to establish efficacious relations through a prescribed ritual procedure performed by experts in carefully secluded sanctuaries set apart for the purpose in the awe-inspiring surroundings and conditions calculated to produce a sense of the numinous."[1] The pastoral tribes require greater courage and hardihood than the agricultural, and also an efficient leadership to protect the cattle. So the cult of heroes and ancestors attains its highest degree of development among the pastorals. The herder in his nomadic life has to live under the scorching heat of the sun, the dreadful thunders, the devastating storms. So his religion is mainly connected with the sky, in which astral and nature myths, often personified in secondary gods and godlings, make their appearance. The Supreme Being of the pastoral religion is generally identified with the sky-god who rules over other deities like the headman of a patriarchal joint family.

On the other hand, among the agricultural tribes, the cult of the Mother Earth, conceived as a female deity, is more prominent. Rituals based upon fertility magic must have played a very significant part in the agricultural societies. "So long as they have pasture, cattle feed and breed of themselves, but by comparison with cattle-raising the work of tilling, sowing and reaping is slow, arduous and uncertain. It requires patience, foresight, faith. Accordingly, agricultural society is characterised by the extensive development of magic."[2] The magical rites designed to secure the fertility of the fields seemed to belong to the special competence of the women who were the first cultivators of the soil and whose power of child-bearing had, in primitive thought, a

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1. James, *PR*, 174.
2. Thomson, *AA*, 21-22.

sympathetic effect on the vegetative forces of the earth.[3] "The fertility of the soil retained its immemorial association with the women who had been the tillers of the earth and were regarded as the depositaries of agricultural magic."[4] The following beliefs are universal : Women cause the fruits to multiply because they know how to produce children. Whatsoever is sown or planted by a pregnant woman will grow and increase as the foetus in her womb. A sterile woman is injurious to the garden, a barren woman makes the fields barren.

"Female deities," writes Starbuck[5], "have often enjoyed the highest place among the gods. This depends upon the nature of the social organisation and the respect in which women are held. Clan life in which the mother is the head of the group is likely to lift the Mother Goddess into a supreme position." The superiority of the goddess over the gods, and the priestesses over the priests, can reasonably be explained in terms of a social system in which maternity counts more than paternity, descent is traced and property handed down through women rather than through men. "In the pre-hunting stage there was no production, only simple appropriation of seeds, fruits and small animals, and therefore there can have been no division of labour at all. With the invention of spear, however, hunting became the men's task, while the women continued the work of food-gathering. This division is universal among hunting tribes, and it was doubtless dictated in the first instance by the relative immobility of mothers. Hunting led to the domestication of animals, and accordingly cattle-raising is normally men's work. On the other hand, the work of food-gathering, maintained, as we have seen, by the women, led to the cultivation of seeds in the vicinity of the tribal settlement ; and accordingly garden tillage is almost universally women's work. Finally, when garden tillage had given place to field tillage and the hoe to the cattle-drawn plough, the work of agriculture was transferred to the men. These ever-shifting tensions between the sexes correspond to the gradual transition from matrilineal to patrilineal descent."[6] This has been explained by Bernal as follows : "As grain gathering was women's business, agriculture was probably women's invention, and in any case women's work, at least till the invention of the ox-drawn hoe or plough, for it was done with the hoe, a derivative of the stone age digging stick with which women used to grub for roots. Where agriculture predominated over hunting in providing food, it accordingly raised the status of women and halted and reversed the tendency to change the reckoning of descent through the mother to that through the father which hunting at first induced. Only where stock raising predominated, as in the lands bordering the agricultural settlements, there was a complete transition to the patriarchy—as we see it in the Bible."[7]

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[3] Frazer, *GB* (ab), 11-82, 399-423 ; Briffault, *M*, iii. 48ff. In ancient Greece agricultural magic was the monopoly of women (Farnell, *CGS*, v, 180ff). Men were excluded from the agricultural rites which took place in October at the time of seed-sowing. The term 'thesmophoria' appears to have been loosely used for all the agricultural rites of Greece. All other Attic festivals of agriculture and fertility, such as 'aretophoria', 'sthenia', 'haloa', 'skira', etc., were likewise celebrated by women (Harrison, *PSGR*, 131, 134, 146). The rites of Dionysos were confined exclusively among women. At Pyreai, in the temples of Dionysos, Demeter and Kore (Persephone), women alone were allowed to enter. At Briseai in Laconia, it was the women who performed the rites of Dionysos in secrecy. At Pellene, men were admitted during the first three days of the nine-day festival of Demeter. The priestess of Demeter occupied a special throne of honour at the Olympic games. At Halicarnassus, she was termed also the priestess of Demos (Herodotus, vii. 178 ; Pausanias, iii. 20 ; vi. 20 ; vii. 27 ; viii. 48 ; ix. 12 ; ix. 20 ; cf. Paton and Myres in *JHS*, xvi, 217). In Babylonia and Assyria women were inspired prophetesses of the god. None but a woman was allowed to enter the secret cave of Bel-Marduk (Sayce, *RAEB*, 455, 466). In ancient Egypt, the queen was the High Priestess of Ra, and at the time of the New Empire, there was scarcely a woman from the highest to the lowest who was not connected with the service of the temples (Erman, *LAE*, 295).

[4] Briffault, *M*, iii, 117.

[5] *ERE*, v, 828.

That the cult of the Indian Mother Goddess might have some bearing on the principles of mother-right was held by a number of scholars[8], but it was R. P. Chanda who asserted categorically that Śāktism arose in India under the same social conditions as those under which Astarte or Ashtart was conceived in Syria, Cybele in Phrygia and Isis in Egypt. "There is a large body of evidence to show that the Semites before their separation passed through a matriarchal form of society.. All those traits which are the oldest and most permanent in the character of Ashtart-Ishtar are those which for other reasons we must predicate of the ancient Semitic tribal mother."[9] Among the Semites of antiquity traces of an older system of mother-right appear to have long survived in the sphere of religion. "In later times father-kin had certainly displaced mother-kin among the Semitic worshippers of Astarte, and probably the same change had taken place among the Phrygian worshippers of Cybele. Yet the older custom lingered in Lycia down to the historical period ; and we may conjecture that in former times it was widely spread through Asia Minor."[10] But father-right elements gradually encroached upon the matters of descent and property in these countries, and this brought a significant change in the field of religion. "In old Arabian religion gods and goddesses occur in pairs, the goddess being the greater, so that the god cannot be her Baal, that the goddess is often a mother without being a wife, and the god her son, and that the progress of things was towards changing goddesses into gods or lowering them beneath the male deity."[11] Frazer shows that in Egypt the archaic system of mother-right lasted down to Roman times. "The Union of Osiris with his sister Isis was not a freak of the story-teller's fancy : it reflected a social custom which was itself based upon practical considerations of the most solid kind. When we reflect that this practice of mother-kin as opposed to father-kin survived down to the latest times of antiquity, not in an obscure or barbarous tribe, but in a nation whose immemorial civilizaton was its glory and the wonder of the world, we may, without being extravagant, suppose that a similar practice formerly prevailed in Syria and Phrygia, and that it accounts for the superiority of the goddess over the god in the divine partnerships of Adonis and Astarte, of Attis and Cybele."[12]

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[6] Thomson, *AA*, 15-16.

[7] *SH*, 61.

[8] cf. Hopkins, *RI*, 541.

[9] *ERE*, ii, 15.

[10] Frazer, *AAO*, 394-95.

[11] Robertson Smith, *KMEA*, 306.

In 1916, six years before the dramatic discovery of Mohenjo-daro, Chanda wrote: "For the conception of a godhead analogous to that of the Śākta conception of the Devī we should travel beyond the countries dominated by the Vedic Aryans and the Avestic Iranians to Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and other countries bordering on the Mediterranean. There is a strong resemblance between the Indian Śākta conception of Śakti and the Śākta ritual of the followers of Vāmācāra and Kulācāra, who practised ceremonial promiscuity on the one hand, and the Semitic conception of Astart, the Egyptian conception of Isis, and the Phrygian conception of Cybele, on the other."[13] In the Śākta scheme of cosmogonical process, the unmanifested *prakṛti* alone existed before creation. She wished to create, and having assumed the form of the Great Mother, she created Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva out of her own body. Referring to the Mother Goddess cult of Mohenjo-daro Marshall rightly observes that, in the later Śākta phase of the primitive Mother Goddess cult, the Devī is transformed into the eternally existing all powerful Female Principle, the *prakṛti* or *śakti*, and having associated with the male principle, the *puruṣa*, she becomes Jagadambā or Jaganmātā, the mother of the universe, the creator of the gods. In her highest form she is Mahādevī, the consort of Śiva but, in spite of her being the consort of the latter, she is his creator[14]. In Asia Minor and round the shores of the Mediterranean are found many examples of Mother Goddess with a young subordinate god by her side. "In Punic Africa she is Tanit with her son; in Egypt, Isis with Horus; in Phoenicia, Astaroth with Tammuz (Adonis); in Asia Minor, Cybele with Attis; in Greece (and especially in the Greek Crete itself), Rhea with Young Zeus. Everywhere she is *unwed*, but made the mother first of her companion by immaculate conception, and then of the gods and of all life by the embrace of her own son. In memory of these original facts her cult (especially the most esoteric mysteries of it) are marked by various practices and observances symbolic to the negation of true marriage and obliteration of sex."[15] Such stories of Virgin Goddesses are relics of an age when the father had no significance at all, and of a society in which man's contribution to the matter of procreation was hardly recognised.

With the establishment of husbandry and domestication as well as with the introduction of the cattle-drawn plough, the economic importance of the males increased further, and simultaneously the male god became the co-equal, and eventually the predominant partner. "In the Minoan-Mycenean region the figures of gods are of very infrequent occurence while those of the goddesses abound. Indeed everywhere that of universal mother, lying behind various emblems and localizations of maternity, predominates, representing the mystery of birth and generation in its manifold aspects and attributes. But closely associated with the goddess was the young male god as her brother, spouse or son, brought together in a nuptial ritual in relation to the annual cycle of vegetation in the agricultural calendrical sequence in which the king and the queen were cast to play the leading roles, either in a divine capacity, as in Egypt, or as servants of the goddess, as in Mesopotamia".[16] The Cretan Zeus represented the process of fecundity on earth, being the son and consort of Rhea, and the Indo-European Sky God of the same name is a syncretistic product.[17] The story of the annual death and resurrection of the god recurs in all agricultural mythologies which is suggestive of the death and revival of plant life in the annual cycle of seasons. According to the originally oriental myth Adonis, a god whose beauty was proverbial, the favourite of Aphrodite, was slain by a boar while hunting. He was passionately mourned by the goddess. At last Zeus consented to his returning to her for a short time once a year. In Greece this was symbolised by a festival called *Adonia* which took place in the month of *Munychion* (April-May). On the first day his disappearance was lamented while on the second, joy and exultation at his return prevailed. The festival was especially celebrated by women. Images of Adonis and Aphrodite were exhibited or carried round. Lamentations for his death and rejoicings for his return were sung.[18] The story of the death and revival of Attis, the young lover of the goddess for whose sake he castrated himself in a frenzy, reflects the annual birth and death of corns which he personated.[19] In the myth of Osiris we also come accross 'the dying god and the mourning goddess theme', Osiris being the spirit of fertility dying to rise again. He represented the plant life, and also probably the fructifying waters of the Nile, and his sister-wife Isis personified the cultivable earth.[20] The Mesopotamian Mother Goddess was known to the Sumerians as Inanna, and her consort was Dumuzi, who was her son. In later Babylonian religion, Inanna was simply transformed into the great goddess Ishtar, and Dumuzi became Tammuz. From the Tammuz ritual texts it would seem that Ishtar descended into the underworld to seek her lover. By order of Allatu, the queen of the underworld, she was stripped of her dress and ornaments at each of the seven gates, and then struck with disease. In the absence of Ishtar the earth did not yield any fruit and so the god Ea created Uddushu-namir and sent him to *Aralu* (the underworld) to bring her back. Allatu was compelled to release Ishtar. She was led back and at each gate her clothing and ornaments were restored to her. Ishtar must have rescued Tammuz since his restoration was annually celebrated in rituals.[21] The recovery of Tammuz by Ishtar is also suggested by the fact that there is a Greek myth telling how Aphrodite (Ishtar) went down to Hades to redeem Adonis (Tammuz) from Persephone.

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[12] *AAO*, 398.

[13] *IAR*, 148-49.

[14] *MIC*, i, 57.

[15] Hogarth in *ERE*, i, 147.

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[16] James, *PR*, 240-41.

[17] Nilsson, *HGR*, 31.

[18] Some beautiful specimens are preserved in Greek poems, cf. Theocritus, XV ; Bion, I.

[19] cf. Catullus, LXIII ; Ovid, *Fasti*, IV. 223ff.

[20] Breasted, *RTAE*, 8ff.

[21] Kramer, *SM*, 83ff ; Sayce, *RAB*, 221ff ; Jastrow, *RBA*, 563ff.

According to the Egyptian legends, Osiris received the corn-seeds from Isis, which suggests that, among the Great Mother-worshipping peoples, it was believed that agricultural civilizations had a female origin. As in Egypt, we can trace in Babylonia the early belief that life in the universe had a female origin.[22] The worship of Mother Earth which later developed into that of an all-pervading Mother Goddess was thus a feature of the agricultural civilizations. When the pastoral-patriarchal warriors invaded the dominions of the Mother-worshipping peoples, they introduced their strongly individualistic gods, but could not altogether eliminate the cult of the Mother Goddess. As Farnell rightly observes : "The Aryan Hellenes were able to plant their Zeus and Poseidon on the high hill of Athens, but not to overthrow the supremacy of Athena in the Central shrine and in the aboriginal soul of the Athenian people".[23] The Vedic Aryans were worshippers of father gods, but they could not annihilate the pre-vedic Earth Mother, and so the goddess Pṛthivī was allowed to remain in the Vedic pantheon, but in a less glorious position in contrast to her male consort Dyaus, the Sky Father. In Egypt, the glory of Osiris superseded that of Isis, and a new cult of the Earth God Seb was introduced. But Isis could not be wiped out. The patriarchal Teutons also tried to discredit the indigenous Earth Mothers. They were conceived as demonesses, as we find in the case of Thor's mother, the giantess Jordh.

Excavations at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro have revealed the fact that some fundamental ideas of Hinduism as well as some primitive beliefs and observances still current in India may be traced as far back as the third millennium B.C. Many traits of later Hinduism, especially those like the cult of the Mother Goddess which cannot directly be traced to the Vedas, are legacies of this Harappa culture. The urban character of the pre-Vedic Indus civilization, like its contemporary civilizations, evolved through an agricultural economy. Without an extensive agricultural background an urban civilization cannot survive. Until and unless a considerable number of people are freed from responsibility for direct food production, it is impossible to build up a city, rich in arts and crafts, trade and commerce. In other words, a city requires food from its adjacent 'surplus areas', and hence we find that the economic foundation of all ancient urban civilizations was agriculture. The urban civilizations of the Nile and the Euphrates drew their wealth from soil. The Harappan economy like the Egyptian and the Babylonian rested on irrigation farming. A bread-wheat (*Triticum compactum*), barley, dates, peas and sesame were cultivated. At Harappa has been found a huge granary, covering a total area of 168 by 135 feet and consisting of two blocks of six chambers each. At Mohenjo-daro a comparable granary was discovered in 1950.

The accumulation of wealth came in primitive societies in two ways : (i) by the development of agriculture and (ii) by the domestication of animals. As we have already seen, where agriculture developed considerably without any intervening pastoral stage, mother-right elements became the guiding forces of society. "This has been the case in North America, where no domestication of animals has taken place, and, most conspicuously among those tribes, such as the Iroquois and the Pueblos, in which agriculture attained in the hands of women an important development. Similarly the matriarchal order is found persisting among the peoples of Indonesia and Micronesia, where the culture of rice and paddy supply the staple means of subsistence and pastoral condition have not existed. The matriarchal character of society has been preserved among many African tribes who have remained chiefly agricultural. This happened notably in Egypt, which owed its wealth and culture to the Nile and to the fields which it fertilised, and where pastoral property never attained any degree of importance."[24] The same also probably held good in the case of the pre-Vedic civilization of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

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[22] Pinches, *RBA*, 94.

[23] *GB*, 96.

Elsewhere the stage of highly developed agriculture was reached only after passing through a purely pastoral phase of long duration, as with the Ṛgvedic peoples of India.[25] Where agriculture developed in its most productive form in the societies which were originally pastoral, we have the opposite result. Instead of raising the economic power and importance of the earth-cultivating women, it gave rise to the most pronounced type of patriarchal societies. The religion of the *Ṛgveda* is therefore patriarchal, a reflection of the society of pastoral warriors. The Ṛgvedic Aryans "never took up cultivation of the soil, leaving it to the native inhabitants ; and, instead, they, like all pastoral warriors, profoundly despised agriculture as the occupation of the conquered races."[26] One should not fail to recall in this connexion that the laws of Manu expressly forbids agricultural work to members of the Brahmanical and warrior castes.[27] Since cultivation was not the predominant mode of food production of the Ṛgvedic Aryans, we find no great Earth Mother in the Vedic literature. Individually she is invoked only once in the *Ṛgveda*.[28] Here, although she is addressed as the mother and substance of all things and invoked in company of the sky to grant blessings, her conception admits of a totally different explanation since she is a figure quite distinct from the Earth or Mother Goddess of the older peoples. Goddesses occupy a subordinate position in Vedic religion. As wives of the great gods they play a still more insignificant part. They are mere shadowy reflections of the gods, but with little independent power. Even the so-called important goddesses like Aditi and Uṣas have no significance in subsequent religious history. We do not find in the early stratum of the Vedic literature the names of such Puranic goddesses as Durgā, Kālī, Ambikā, Umā and others.

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[24] Briffault, *M* ii. 251-52.

[25] In fact, out of 10,462 verses of the *Ṛgveda* only 25 refer to agriculture (i. 23. 15 ; 117. 21 ; ii. 14. 11 ; iv. 57. 1-8 ; v. 53. 13 ; vi. 6. 4 ; viii. 20, 19 ; 22. 6 ; 78. 10 ; x. 34. 13 ; 48. 7 ; 83. 37 ; 94. 13 ; 101. 3-4 ; 117. 7 ; 146. 6). In the older portions of the *Ṛgveda*, we have only three words of agricultural significance—*ūrdara* (ii. 14. 11), *dhānya* (v. 53. 13) and *vapanti* (vi.6.4)—while an entire hymn consisting of 8 verses (iv. 57. 1-8) is proved to be a later interpolation. See Hopkins in *JAOS*, xvii, 85n. Side by side, the importance attached to the possession of cattle is shown by numerous passages. The word *go* denoting the cow is used as one of the synonyms for *pṛthivī* the earth. According to the *Nighaṇṭu* (ii, 11), nine other terms were also used to denote the cow. Even in the *Ṛgveda* the gods are invoked as offsprings of the cows (vi. 50. 11) and the poets did not hesitate to compare their songs with the lowing of the cows (vii. 32. 22 ; vii. 106. 1 . ix. 22. 2, etc.) or to designate the starry heaven after the term *gāvaḥ* (i. 154. 6 ; vii. 36. 1), "Again and again in the songs and invocations to the gods, the prayer for cattle and horses occurs. Also the strife amongst the hostile aboriginal inhabitants turns on the passion of cattle. Therefore, too, the old word for 'war' or 'battle' is originally desire for cattle (*gaviṣṭi*). In the most extravagant expressions, cows and bullocks are praised as the most precious possesions.", See Winternitz, *HIL*, i, 64-65.

The religion of the Mother Goddess existed until the dawn of civilization and even later in different parts of the world. Figurines from Knossos include all the principal types of the Mother Goddess found in South East Europe and the Aegean basin.[29] Apart from the Cretan centre of the Mother Goddess cult there was another centre at Malta where female figurines of West Asiatic type, with marked sexual features, are found in large numbers.[30] The Cretan Mother Goddess who was later equated with Rhea, was the embodiment of the qualities that were later specialised by such Greek goddesses as Gaea, Demeter, Artemis, Aphrodite and others and it is also possible that she was originally identified with the pre-Hellenic Athena and Artemis and the Phrygian Cybele.[31] The Cretan claim to have been the breeding spot of the Phrygian mysteries of the Great Mother Cybele cannot be lightly dismissed.[32] In Phrygia the cult of Rhea-Cybele chiefly flourished in the city of Pessinus on the river Sangarius. Like Durgā she was the Corn Mother as well as the gooddess of war, and her vehicle was lion. Her oldest sanctuary lay on a rock named Agdos near the grave of Attis, her son and lover. According to the legend recorded by Pausanias,[33] when Attis died, his spirit passed over into a fig tree which the goddess Agdistis (Rhea-Cybele) carried into her cave for ever. The cult of Cybele, came to Rome in the beginning of the second century B.C. According to Dionysus of Halicarnassus,[34] every year the Praetors conducted sacrifices and games in her honour. She was also honoured by theatrical shows which became a regular institution in Rome under the name *Ludi Megalenses*.

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[26] Briffault, *M*, iii, 59.

[27] x. 84.

[28] v. 84 ; cf. *AV*, xii. 1.

[29] Evans, *PM*, i, 49, fig. 12-13.

[30] Zammit in *JRAI*, liv, 79ff ; Idem, *PM*, 13ff ; Murray, *EM*, 11, 19.

[31] Nilson, *MMR*, 439 ; Harrison, *PSGR*, fig. 86.

[32] Harrison, *PSGR*, 469 ; *I*, 54n, 164.

[33] vii. 17. 10 ; cf. Arnobius, *Adversus Gentes*, v. 5 ; Lucian *Dialogui Deorum*, 12.

[34] *Antiquitates Romanae*, ii, 19.

But the Hellenic Rhea, who was given a rank of diminishing importance in the Olympian group of deities as the consort of Kronos, thanks to her connexion with Crete, although called 'mother of the gods', was not a self-created being, but the daughter of Gaea, the Earth Mother, and Uranus, the Sky Father, who equate with Indo-Aryan Dyaus and Pṛthivī. According to the *Theogony* of Hesiod,[35] Kronos, the youngest Titan who was the brother and husband of Rhea, cut off the generative organ of his father and threw it into the sea. It was full of sperm from which the charming goddess Aphrodite was born. The story reminds us of the emasculation of Attis. According to a Puranic legend, the god Śiva, on one occasion, cut off his own generative organ. However, Aphrodite was not originally a Greek goddess. Her cult reached Greece through the Phoenicians from the great Semitic family of peoples. That she was originally a goddess of vegetation is proved by her association with Adonis. The latter was no other than the Babylonian Tammuz, one of whose Semitic appellations was Adonai, which meant 'My lord', and this Semitic epithet was the source of the Greek name Adonis. The goddess loved this young Adonis, but he would die every year, and the goddess, and with her the whole world would go into mourning over this tragedy. In Rome she was transformed into Venus whose original sanctuary was on Mount Eryx.[36] As early as the second Punic war her temple was erected on the Capitol[37] where she was worshipped as the guardian of marriage and agriculture and also as the goddess of the *meretrices*, i.e. the harlots. Her cult was popularised by the poet Vergil and also by heroes like Sulla, Pompey and Caeser.[38] Finally Augustus made her the Magana Mater of Rome. Likewise, Artemis in her original character was probably worshipped as an Earth and Corn Mother in Western Iran and its adjoining territories where she bore the name Anakitis and was honoured by the temple prostitution of numerous hieroduli.[39] The Artemis of Ephesus was thought of not as maiden, but as a nurse and all-nourishing mother, as is indicated by the numerous breasts of her cult images. On the other hand, the Hellenic Artemis was the Lady of the Wood, always thought of as hunting or otherwise in rapid movement, lightly clad, with dress tucked up high, sometimes on horseback or in a chariot drawn by deer. In her Roman form of Diana she became the combination of all these characteristics.

But a more specialised from of Corn Mother is met with in the conception of Demeter and her daughter Kore Persephone. The pre-Hellenic character of this goddess is marked by the fact that Diodorus Siculus refers to the Cretans as the people who introduced the mysteries of Demeter and that the mysteries from Egypt, i.e. those of Isis and Osiris, were same as those of Demeter and Dionysus.[40] Referring to the festivals of Demeter Herodotus writes : "It is in honour of Isis, who is called in Greek tongue Demeter."[41] The prefix *deai* of Demeter was the Cretan word for 'barley' and the goddess was thus the 'Barley Mother'. *Deai* also denotes the earth. The Earth Mothers, Demeter and Persephone, were distinct personalities, and yet in function and idea identical. So need was felt to define their relations. "They might be explained as sisters, but as there was male deity in the background, and Demeter's name spoke of maternity, it was natural to regard them as mother and daughter."[42] Persephone was not also an unmixed deity. It appears that Kore and Persephone were amalgamated into one and she was made responsible for sending up new crops from the underground by her annual return from the nether regions. This gave the earlier agricultural rites a deeper meaning, associating them with the death and resurrection theme.

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[35] 200-264.

[36] Tacitus, *Annales*, iv. 43.

[37] Livy, xxii. 9.7.

[38] Suetonius, *Julius*, 6 ; Valleius Paterculus, *Annales*, ii, 41.

[39] Licht, *SLAG*, 194ff.

It is difficult on our part to tell precisely to what natural phenomena the character of Isis was first referred, but we may assume that she was originally the Earth and Corn Mother of Egypt.[43] In her character of a goddess of fecundity she resembled the great Mother Goddess of Asia, yet differed from them in question of chastity and fidelity. Diodorus Siculus attributes the discovery of barley to Isis, and at her festivals stalks of grains were carried in procession.[44] Augustine says that Isis made the discovery of barley, and that is why the Romans identified her with Ceres, the Roman Demeter.[45] Tertullian says that Isis wore a wreath of corn which she had discovered.[46] It appears that further refinement and spiritualisation of Isis happened in later times with the popularity of her cult in the Roman empire. Her worship was introduced to Rome by the way of lower Italy (especially from Puteoli) about the time of Sulla, but her cult was officially recognised only under Caligula. Sacred prostitution was a feature of her worship.[47] Harvest festivals were performed in her honour. Apuleius has left us a vivid description of one of her processions.[48]

The earliest settlers of the Tigro-Euphrates Valley were agriculturists and like other agricultural communities they were worshippers of the Earth Mother, the Creatrix, the goddess whose moods were reflected by natural phenomena, whose lovers were the spirits of seasons. From this goddess developed the later conception of the goddess Ishtar who, like the Egyptian Isis, absorbed many other local goddesses. Tiamat was a Babylonian goddess of dual personality representing the watery chaos out of which the earth was fashioned.[49] According to Herodotus, Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, was founded by King Ninus and queen Semiramis. This lady was reputed to be the daughter of Derceto, the fish goddess whom Pliny identified with Atargatis. Semiramis was actually an Assyrian queen of revered memory who was later deified and took the place of a goddess, apparently Nina, the prototype of Derceto. This Nina, perhaps the form of the Earth Mother Damkina, wife of Ea, was the Great Mother of the Sumerian city Nina, and she was one of the many Earth Goddesses later absorbed by Ishtar. This goddess was also worshipped at Lagash.[50]

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[40] v. 77 ; cf. Plutarch, *IO*, 35.

[41] ii. 59.

[42] Farnell, *CGS*, v, 124.

[43] Tiele, *HER*, 57 ; Wallis-Budge, *GE*, ii, 203ff.

[44] i. 14.

[45] *De Civitate Dei*, viii. 27.

[46] *De Cult Feminarum*, 7.

[47] Josephus, *Antiquitates*, xviii. 65 ; Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, i, 76.

[48] *Metamorphoses*, xi.

[49] See my paper in *JOI*, xvii, 316ff.

In Asia Minor, before the settlement of the Hittites, a great Mother Goddess was worshipped and she bore various local names. At Commana in Pontus, she was known to the Greeks as Ma, a name which may have been as old as that of the Sumerian Mama or Mamitu. In Armenia she was Anaites ; in Cilicia she was Ati, while in Phrygia she was best known as Cybele, mother and wife of Attis, who linked with Ishtar as mother and wife of Tammuz, Aphrodite as mother and wife of Adonis, and Isis as mother, sister and wife of Osiris. In Phoenicia, the Great Mother was called Astarte, who was a form of Ishtar, and identical with the Biblical Ashtorath. In the Syrian city of Hierapolis she bore the name of Atargatis. The Hittites who brought with them a social system based on the principles of father-right and a patriarchal pantheon could not eradicate the spirit of Mother-worship, and when in process of time their power declined and their chief god fell from his predominant place in the religion of the interior, the Great Mother lived on, being the goddess of the land.[51] Similarly, in Babylonia and Assyria, the peoples of the goddess cult were fused with those of the god cult, but the prominence maintained by Ishtar who absorbed many old goddesses, testifies to the persistence of antique religious ceremonials among the descendants of the earliest settlers of the Tigro-Euphrates valley.

In view of what has been stated above we shall now turn our attention to the origin of Śāktism which is a very important cult among the Hindus of the present day all over India. Those who worship the supreme deity exclusively as a Female Principle are called Śākta. Śakti or the Mother Goddess is worshipped in various forms, and numerous shrines are dedicated to her images in different parts of the country. The Śāktas conceive the Mother Goddess as the personification of primordial energy and the source of all divine as well as cosmic evolution. She is identified with the Supreme Being conceived as the source and spring as well as the controller of all the forces and potentialities of nature. The nineteenth century scholars sought to trace the worship of this Female Principle in the literal interpretation of some of the hymns of the Vedas as well as in the philosophical interpretation of the Sāṅkhya system. They argued that the Sāṅkhya principle of *prakṛti* served as the basis for the conception of an all-pervading Female Principle and in order to find out the origin of the former they depended especially on the Vedic literature. Their line of approach was as follows : At first the sky was personified as the heavenly father, and the earth as the mother of all creatures. Then evolved the idea of *prakṛti* in the place of the earth. This *prakṛti* began to be conceived as the germinal productive principle—the eternal mother capable of evolving all created things out of herself, but never so creating unless united with the eternal spiritual principle, the *puruṣa*.[52] But we have seen that the conception of a Female Principle which is in most of the cases the reflection of a female dominated society is incompatible with the patriarchal social organisation of the Vedic Aryans. Even the internal evidence of the Sāṅkhya points to a matriarchal state of society : the origin of the anomalous position of the *puruṣa* in the Sāṅkhya can presumably be traced to the anomalous position of the males of a matriarchal society. Secondly, the worship of the Female Principle, which was originally connected with agricultural communities, is inconsistent with the purely pastoral life as reflected in the *Ṛgveda*. In fact, the Vedas are not the effective sources in which one may seek the origin of the idea of the Female Principle. It is to be sought elsewhere, obviously in the pre-Vedic tradition of India.

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[50] Mackenzie, *MBA*, 277.

[51] Garstang, *SG*, 17-18.

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[52] Wilson, *SRSH*, 240-44 ; Barth, *RI*, 199-200 ; Monier-Williams, *RTLI*, 180ff ; etc.

CHAPTER TWO

EARTH AND WOMAN

In the earliest phases of man's social existence his thought was conditioned by the urge to promote the propagation of his race and the production of crops. As Frazer says, "to live and to cause to live, to eat food and to beget children, these were the primary wants of man in the past, and they will be the primary wants of man in the future so long as the world lasts."[1] An adequate supply of offspring and food was an essential need and a necessary condition for primitive existence and so the mysterious forces of propagation and nutrition acquired a sacred significance. Peoples of the past instinctively projected their own experiences into the objects around them and thus associated various ideas in order to constitute a practical philosophy of life, making unconscious use of the only principle available to them, viz. the principle of analogy. Thus, they came to the conclusion that natural productivity should be viewed in terms of human productivity, earth-mother in terms of human mother.

Womanly Conditions Attributed to the Earth.

"The identification of earth with woman," writes Briffault, "pervades the thought of all stages of culture, and pages could be filled with illustrations of the universal equation. 'The mother and the soil are alike' was a principle of Roman jurisprudence ; and the poets express themselves in the same terms as the lawyers. In ancient India, at the wedding ceremony, the woman is called 'a seed field' and the priests exhorted the bridegroom, saying, 'sow her with thy seed'. 'Your women are the fields' says the *Qurān*. The mother's womb and the womb of the earth are forms of the same thing ; 'naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked I shall return thither'. The earth is the All-Mother ; from her all things are issued, 'for all of earth and all turn to earth again', 'Hail mother of harvests, Saturn's earth', sings Vergil, 'hail mighty mother of men'. In words almost identical the rude Germans sang : 'Hail Earth, mother of men ; may you grow in the embrace of God, filled with nourishment for the welfare of men'. In the Vedic hymns, the earth is the mother of man, and he is the son of earth ; and in Persian religion man was created out of the earth. In many savage cosmologies the first man arose out of the earth. The word 'homo' is itself derivative of 'humus'. Although Adam was fashioned out of the earth, Lactantius blames Democritus for believing that man came out of the earth like worms. Lucretius, however, declares that 'animals cannot have fallen from the sky, nor the inhabitants of the earth have issued out of lagoons of salt-water ; rightly is the earth called 'mother' for out of the earth all things have been created.'"[2] Briffault has given two examples from Indian sources regarding the identification of earth with woman. Numerous such examples can be furnished from ancient Indian literature. The word *kṣetra* (seed-field) applies to woman in all cases. In the law book of Manu, man is identified with seed while woman with seed-field : *kṣetra-bhūtā smṛtā nārī vījabhūtaḥ smṛtaḥ pumān.*[3] This line recurs in most of the Purāṇas and the law books.

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[1] *A* (GB, iv), 5.

The identification of earth with woman implies that the functions of the earth and those of women are alike. The same preconditions which fertilise women are also thought to fertilise Mother Earth. Here we may refer to the fertility ritual called *ambuvācī* which is observed by the Bengalee women on and from the seventh day of the third month of the Hindu calendar. In Bengal, it is believed that, during the four days of the said ritual, Mother Earth menstruates in order to prepare herself for her fertilising work. During this period there is an entire cessation of all ploughing, sowing and other farm work. Widows have to undergo a number of taboos since procreation is forbidden to them.

Aristotle, Pliny and other naturalists believed, wrongly, that the embryo is formed from the blood retained in the uterus after the stoppage of menstruation.[4] The same belief is also found in numerous scattered passages of the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas.[5] Since earth is identified with woman, the conception of the menstruating earth-goddesses is quite natural. In the Punjab, Mother Earth sleeps for a week in each month.[6] In the Deccan, after the *navarātra*, her temple is closed from the tenth to the fullmoon day while she rests and refreshes herself.[7] A similar rite of purification is made in the case of the goddess Bhagavatī at her temple in Kerala.[8] In the Malabar region, Mother Earth rests during the hot weather until she gets the first shower of rain.[9] In many parts of India, great importance is attached to the menstruation of the goddess Pārvatī.[10] Reference should also be made in this connexion to the menstruation of the goddess Kāmākhyā of Assam.[11]

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[2] *M*, iii, 56f.

[3] ix. 33.

[4] Thomson, *SAGS*, 209.

[5] For everything about the menstrual beliefs and rituals see my *IPR*, 8-19.

[6] *NINQ*, ii, 172 ; *PNQ*, ii. 205.

[7] Underhill, *HRY*, 34.

[8] Nagam Aiya, *TSM*, ii, 89ff.

[9] Iyer. *CTC*, ii, 78.

[10] *IA*, xviii, 155ff.

[11] Kāmarūpa is associated with the Yoni (*pudendum muliebre*) of Satī and the presiding goddess of the *pītha* (holy resort) is Kāmākhyā. The name of the goddess may be traced to the Austric words *Kamoi* (demon), *Kamoit* (devil), *Komin* (grave), *Kamet* (corpse), *Kamru* (name of a god), etc. See *AT*, Oct. 22. 1957. The worship of the goddess is said to have been introduced by the Asura Naraka, the king of Kāmarūpa. See *Kālikāpurāṇa*, chs. 38-39, 42-45 ; There is no image

Thomson writes : "It is important to observe that the magic of human fecundity attaches to the process, not to the result . . . to the lochial discharge, not to the child itself, and consequently all fluxes of blood, menstrual as well as lochial, are treated alike as manifestations of the life giving power inherent in the female sex. In primitive thought, menstruation was regarded, quite correctly, as the process of the same nature as childbirth."[12] In the Tantras, for the same reason, special importance is attached to the menstrual blood. Before the Bhils begin sowing they set up a stone in the field and smear it with vermilion.[13] As the vermilion stands for menstrual blood, the act of smearing it on the stone implies the infusion of productive energy into the earth.[14] Most of the figurines of the Mother Goddess from Mohenjo-daro are painted over with a red slip or wash.[15] The oldest extant figurines of the Mother Goddess, such as the Venus of Willendorf, are painted red.[16] Some of the Egyptian, Maltese, Cyproite and Danubian figurines are also found ruddled.[17] In the *Devīmāhātmya*[18] as well as in the *Vāmanapurāṇa*[19] the Devī is identified with Raktadantikā, a goddess who is supposed to be red all through according to the description found in the *Mūrtirahasya.*

The relation between vermilion or red ochre with the productive aspects of nature has been shown by Robert Briffault,[20] and here we do not want to fill the pages with illustrations. Red being the fertility symbol representing the menstrual blood is appropriate to the female figurines supposed to represent the Earth Goddess. Thomson writes : "It is a worldwide custom for menstruating or pregnant women to daub their bodies with red ochre, which serves at once to warn the men away and to enhance their fertility. In many marriage ceremonies the bride's forehead is painted red—a sign that she is forbidden to all men save her husband and a guarantee that she will bear him children."[21] Married Hindu women, as a rule, use vermilion on their forehead. Widows and virgins cannot use it because they are not entitled to procreate.

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in her temple ; only a Yoni-shaped stone, smeared with vermilion, is set up to represent the goddess. The temple is open to the visits of foreigners. But its rituals are not, even now, very accurately known to the uninitiated. During the new-moon week the shrine is closed to all because, it is believed, that is the period during which the goddess is unclean for her menstruation. Conversely, the Brahmaputra which flows under the shrine is ceremonially impure throughout the year, except on the annual bathing festival of the Aśokāṣṭamī, when ablution in the water becomes as cleansing as bathing in the Mother Ganges herself.

12. *SAGS*, 25.
13. Crooke, *RFNI*, 250.
14. Chattopadhyaya, *L.* 305ff.
15. Mackay, *FEM*, i, 259.
16. Macalister, *TEA*, i, 447 ; Burkitt, *P*, 222 (f. xvi) ;Childe, *DEC*, 175.
17. Mackay, *FEM*, i, 259.
18. xi. 41-54.
19. lvi. 67-70
20. *M*, ii, 412ff.
21. *SAGS*, 209.

The bones of the upper palaeolithic and neolithic interments are found painted red. This widespread custom clearly has a ritual significance since red is the renewal of life. To paint the bones with the ruddy colouring of life was "the nearest thing to mummification that the palaeolithic people knew ; it was an attempt to make the body again servicable for its owner's use."[22] The same is the conclusion of George Thomson who says : "The symbolism becomes quite clear when we find, as we commonly do, that the skeleton has been laid in the contracted or uterine posture. Smeared with the colour of life, curled up like a babe in the womb—what more could the primitive man do to ensure that the soul of the departed would be born again ?"[23]

Thus we find that the conception of the qualitative sameness of earth and woman may explain why in Bengal and other places the earth is believed to menstruate, why in different parts of India the Earth Goddesses have there monthly courses, and why there are so many rites and customs in India and elsewhere in which all fluxes of blood are treated alike as manifestations of life-giving power inherent in the female sex.

The Earth Goddesses

In the introduction of the present work we have seen that the conception of the Earth Mother is as varied as the degrees of culture attained by separated communities of mankind, and in that connexion we have especially referred to the Mother Goddesses of Western Asia and the Mediterranean region. Among the deities of the patriarchal Teutons, the goddess Nerthus represented Mother Earth. Tacitus could recognise this deity of his own land among the German tribes : *Nerthum id est Terram Matrem*.[24] The latter goddess, Terra Mater or Tellus or Ops Mater was the Earth Goddess of the Romans, whose cult they carried far and wide. The Teutonic Tamfana, Frija and Nehalennia were intimately associated with the earth, while the giantess Jordh, mother of Thor, was simply the Earth. Her husband was Odin who was probably a Sky God. Thor in addition to being the thunderer was a god of fertility who sent the showers to fertilise the ground and produce the fruits of the earth, being the son of Jordh, the Earth Mother. It is interesting to note that the sun was female in Norse mythology. In the Prose *Edda* we also come across a group of goddesses known as *asynja*, who were probably earth-spirits.[25] The Celts on the other hand were probably matriarchal peoples and in their religion goddesses predominate over the gods. Ther earliest Gaelic pantheon was styled Tuatha Dé Danann. They believed that all their deities sprang from a great Earth Mother called Danu. The British gods were also the children of the great Earth Goddess Don, who was surely the same divine personage as Danu, the mother of the Tuatha Dé Danann.[26] In Esthonian religion Mother Earth is also the presiding deity of birth and death. In Finn mythology, Akka was the Earth Goddess who was popularly called great-grandmother.[27] The Pre-Indo-European peoples of Armenia worshipped a great Earth Goddess who had identical characteristics of the Babylonian Ishtar. This goddess was later known as Anahit whose Iranian counterpart was Anaitis. The Iranian Spenta Armaiti became in Armenian Sandramet who was first changed into the goddess of the Earth and of Hades and became the wife of Aramazd ; and finally there was a total transformation when she became a male god.[28] This transformation from a goddess to a god, as we shall see later, reflects the spirit of a social transformation from mother-right to father-right.

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[22] Macalister, *TEA*, i, 502.

[23] *SAGS*, 210.

[24] *Germania*, 40.

[25] Grimm, *TM*, 250ff.

Such titles as 'the mother', 'the good mother from whom all things originate', as well as a cult of Earth, were widespread among the American Indian tribes. In Mexico, Centeotle and in Peru, Mama Pacha were worshipped as the Earth Goddesses.[29] The goddess Centeotle absorbed many other goddesses, like the Babylonian Ishtar. She was the 'maize-mother' which she protected and nourished. Her name also includes Tonacajohua, i.e. the goddess who sustains. As the Earth Goddess, she was also the goddess of death who took the dead to her bosom. Another Earth Goddess of Mexico was Conatlicue who was also a goddess of death and war.[30] The Earth Goddess of the Aztecs was depicted as a many-breasted woman, like the Ephesian Artemis.[31] The Caribs, when there is an earthquake, say that it is their Mother Earth dancing. The Comanches call the Earth their Mother. The Algonquins sing medicine-songs to Mesukkumik Okwi, the Earth, the great-grandmother of all.[32] The cult of an Earth Mother is also in vogue among many African tribes. In different parts of Western Africa she is an object of extensive cult.[33]

In China, the cult of the Earth Goddess is associated with tree worship. The ancient Chinese believed that their source of life was a gigantic peach tree which was surrounded by a beautiful garden that was under the direct care of the goddess Si Wang Mu. She appears to have originally been an Earth Goddess whose Japanese counterpart was Seiobo. Sometimes she is depicted as a weird deity like the Phigalian Demeter.[34] The tree of immortality was closely associated with the Far Eastern Earth Mother, who might appear before favoured mortals either as a beautiful woman, or as a woman riding on a dragon, or as half-woman and half-fish, or, half-woman and half-serpent.[35] Yin, the female principle of Taoism, is sometimes equated with the earth. In the Japanese texts *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* we have references to Sky Father and Earth Mother.

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26. Squire, *CML*, 48-51, 252.
27. Tylor, *PC*, i, 247-277.
28. Chatterji in *JAS*, 1959, 199ff.
29. Reville, *RMP*, 73, 95, 197.
30. Mackenzie, *MPCA*. 230ff.
31. Brinton, *MNW*, 157.
32. Tylor, *PC*, i, 244ff.
33. Leonard, *LNT*, 349ff.
34. Edknis, *RC*, 151.
35. Mackenzie, *MCJ*. 152 ; See ch. iii.

Cybele and Demeter

What appears to be certain is that in pre-Hellenic Greece and Crete, and elsewhere throughout Europe, the Earth Mother was worshipped and propitiated from an early prehistoric period. The symbols of the Cretan Mother Goddess were snake, dove, double axe, horns of consecration, obese figurines, mountain, tree or pillar. In her original form she was the Earth Mother, the goddess of vegetation. In a group of Minoan-Mycenean signet rings the vegetation cycle is represented in a series of cult scenes portraying the Mother Goddess in a variety of setting. We may refer, in this connexion, to the Vaphio signet, now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, in which 'the dying god and the mourning goddess theme' is depicted.[36] It was from Asia Minor that the earliest Neolithic influences were felt in Crete (about 4000 B.C.), and this may account for the Minoan version of the 'suffering goddess theme'.[37]

The Phrygian Cybele was obviously a descendant of an ancient Mother Goddess of that region who was generally identified with the pre-Hellenic Mother Goddess of Crete. The story of the introduction of her cult in Rome is interesting. A prophecy foretold the Romans that the Carthegian invader Hannibal would be driven from Italy if the Idaean mother were brought from Pessinus to Rome.[38] Livy says : Publius Scipio went with all married women to bring the goddesss. She was carried by the women and when the ship arrived at the mouth of the Tiber, the first ladies of the state headed by Claudia Quinta came to receive the goddess. She carried the goddess to Rome, where the whole city poured out to meet her. Then she was carried to the temple of Victory on the Palatine.[39] It was in the middle of April 204 B.C. when the goddess arrived. The goddess went to work at once, because the harvest of that year was such as had not been seen for many days and the very next year Hannibal left Rome.

The myth of Demeter is very significant to the study of the original character of the Mother Goddess. One day while Persephone, daughter of Demeter, was wandering, the earth opened suddenly, and Pluto, god of Hades, forcibly carried her off. When Demeter heard that Pluto had carried off her daughter with the consent of Zeus, she withdrew herself from Olympus and also cast a blight upon the earth as a result of which no barley grew, nor did trees yield fruit. The goddess then retired to Eleusia where the king Celeus received her cordially and she became the nurse of his sons Triptolemus and Demophon. She desired to make Demophon immortal, and put him one night into a fire. But his real mother screamed aloud as a result of which the spell was broken, and the boy perished. Demeter, however, made up for the loss by instructing the other son in the art of agriculture. Meanwhile the blight remained upon the earth, and mankind was perishing from famine. Therefore a compromise between the parties was arranged and Zeus declared that Persephone should spend one third of each year on earth with her mother, and the remaining two-thirds with Pluto.

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[36] James, *PR*, fig. 14.

[37] See ch. i.

[38] Livy, xxix, 10-11 ; Ovid, *Fasti*, iv, 25ff ; xviii. 16.

[39] xxix. 14.

According to Sir James Frazer, the myth reveals that Demeter and Persephone are personifications of corn. The former is the ripe corn and the latter, the seed corn.[40] Persephone's stay in the underworld is certainly suggestive of the seed-corn staying under the earth. Pausanias writes that he saw a cave sacred to Black Demeter at Phigalia.[41] The Black Demeter appears to have been the personification of the barren earth in winter ; the Green Demeter, the goddess of green plants ; and the Yellow Demeter, the deity of ripe harvest. The Indian Buddhist goddess Tārā is also blue, green and yellow.[42] Kālī, the black and naked goddess, might also represent the barren and naked winter earth in her original character.

In the month of Boedromion (September-October) the *Eleusinia* took place. It was a mystic ceremony of initiation performed during the festival of Demeter. The idea of the dying away and the subsequent revival of the seed-grain, which had its mythical counterpart in the story of Persephone abducted by Pluto in the underworld, developed into a secret cult, into which persons were initiated through special mysterious usages, the secrets of which no one was allowed to reveal. On the sixth day a great festal procession started from Athens to Eleusis (about 9 miles). Thousands took part in it, crowned with ivy and myrtle, carrying in their hands torches, agricultural implements, and ears of corn. The purpose of the mysteries was to infuse the spirit of Persephone's joyful resurrection into the hearts of the young initiates.[43]

Earth Goddess of Harappa Culture

In a passage of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* the Devī says : "Next O Ye gods, I shall support the whole world with the life-sustaining vegetables which shall grow out of my own body during a period of heavy rain. I shall gain fame on earth then as Śākambharī."[44] Thus the goddess is no other than Mother Earth from whose body grows the life-sustaining vegetables. In this connexion we may refer to a seal unearthed at Harappa which, on the obverse, shows a nude female figure, head downwards and legs stretched out upwards, with a plant issuing out of her womb.[45] This may be regarded as the prototype of the aforesaid Earth Mother Śākambharī. On the reverse, we find a female figure with dishevelled hair and arms raised in alarm, and a male figure standing in front of her in a threatening attitude with a shield-like object in one hand, and a sickle-like object in the other. Marshall suggests that the scene is intended to portray a human sacrifice connected with the Earth Goddess depicted on the other side. The association of the Earth Goddess with the vegetative forces of nature is not confined only to the said 'Śākambharī'-seal. There are many others in which trees and plants are associated with the goddess. In one such seal the goddess stands between the bifurcated branches of a *pipal* tree in front of which appears a half-kneeling worshipper behind whom stands a goat with a human face, and in the lower section there are seven persons dressed in short kilt and wearing long pigtails.[46]

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[40] *SPW*, 37ff.

[41] viii. 42.

[42] Bhattacharya, *IBI*, 306ff.

[43] The transition from one stage of life to another is effected by the rites of initiation. The function of initiation—to admit the child to the status of adult—is expressed in primitive thought as a belief that the child dies and is born again (cf. the Indian conception of *dvijatva*). In primitive thought, every serious event in physical life is equivalent to death followed by resurrection. The qualification for admission into the adult group is not birth, but rebirth. See my *IPR*, 5ff ; for the Greek rituals of initiation see Thomson, *AA*, 97ff.

[44] xcii. 43f (Pargiter's tr.).

The figurines of the Kulli culture finish at the waist in a splayed pedestal, arms bent with hands on the hips, breasts usually shown, eyes fashioned from small stones, hair elaborately dressed, ornamented by oval pendants resembling cowrie-shells, and bangles on arms and wrists. In the Zhob valley sites the same type of female figures recurs with necklaces, large and beak-like noses, hooded heads, exaggerated breasts, circular eye-holes, and slit mouths and bangles.[47] That they had a fertility significance is shown by the representation of the cowrie-shells and by that of a phallus carved in stone at the mound of Mogul Ghundai near the left bank of the Zhob river, and at the neighbouring mound of Periano-Ghundai on the right bank of the river where a *yoni* is depicted with great prominence. The Zhob figurines remind us of the Phigalian Demeter or the Black Annis. As Piggot rightly observes : "a grim embodiment of the Mother Goddess who is also the guardian of the dead—an underworld deity connected alike with the corps and the seed-corn buried beneath the earth. The fertility aspect so often connected with such underworld gods is indeed represented by other models."[48]

The finds of southern Sind along the Indus include terracotta figurines exactly like the specimens from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.[49] The figurines of the Mother Goddess from Chanhu-daro are also of Mohenjo-daro type, the only difference being that they stand upon a flat, more or less open base which recall the figurines from the pre-Harappan sites of Northern and Southern Baluchistan. Many of the figurines from Mohenjo-daro are painted with red slip or wash,[50] as in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and Malta,[51] but those from Harappa retain no trace of paint.[52] We have already dealt with the symbolism of red and its connection with the Earth Mother. The goddesses wear a distinctive head dress which rises from the back of the head, in some cases directly from the head, while in others it forms part of the coiffure. Certain prehistoric figures of Earth Mother from Adalia in Asia Minor wear something similar to the fan-shaped portion of the above headdress. Reference may also be made in this connexion to a figurine of the Semitic Mother Goddess Astarte, the great goddess of vegetation and fertility, whose headdress bears a resemblance to that of the figurines from Mohenjo-daro.[53] The goddess is significantly nude save for a very short skirt round the waist secured by a girdle. The significance of nudism in relation to Mother Earth will be dealt with in a subsequent section of this chapter.

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[45] Marshall, *MIC* i, 52.

[46] *Ibid.*, 63ff ; Mackay, *FEM*, i, 337-38.

[47] Stein, *ATWNB*, 38, 42, 60, 75 ; *ATG*, 37, 70, 120, 126, 151, 162.

[48] *PI* 127.

[49] Majumdar, *ES*, 38, 68.

[50] Mackay, *FEM*, i, 349 ; Marshall, *MIC*, i, 341.

[51] Brunton and Cater-Thompson, *BC*', 29.

[52] Vats, *EH*, 292.

Earth : Vedic and Post-Vedic Conceptions

Since cultivation was not the predominant mode of food production of the Ṛgvedic Aryans we find no great Earth Mother in Vedic literature.[54] Heaven and Earth are described in the Vedic literature as universal parents, but no cosmogonic importance is really attached to them. In the *Atharvaveda*[55] we have a beautiful hymn dedicated to Mother Earth, while in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[56] we come across a description of the marriage of heaven and earth. The conception of a Sky Father fertilising the Earth Mother is met with in a number of mythologies. In a Greek magic-formula of the first century A.D. the sky is invoked to rain and the earth to conceive and yield. This formula, as Farnell points out,[57] "savours of a very primitive liturgy that closely resembles the famous Dodenaean invocation to Zeus, the Sky God and Mother Earth ; and it belongs to that part of the Eleusinian ritual *quod ad frumentum attinet*." Aeschylus wrote :

> The pure Sky yearns with love to wound the Earth,
> The loving Earth yearns likewise to be wed,
> And from the heavenly bridegroom showers descend
> Upon the bride, who brings forth for mankind
> The grazing cattle and Demeter's corn
> With precious moisture riping the fruits
> To autumn fulness. (*Danaides*)

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[53] Mackay, *FEM*, i, 260

[54] See ch. i. In the *Ṛgveda*, heaven and earth are described as universal parents (i. 155. 3 ; 159. 2 ; iii. 3. 11 ; vii. 53. 2 ; ix. 85. 12 ; x. 1. 7 ; 35. 3 ; 64. 14 ; 65. 8 ; 110. 9.). In many passages heaven is separately styled father and the earth mother (i. 89. 4 ; 90. 7 ; 159. 2 ; 160. 2 ; 185. 11 ; iv. 1. 10 ; v. 42. 16 ; 43. 3 ; vi. 70. 6 ; 72. 6 ; viii. 92. 2 ; x. 53. 3 ; 88. 15 ; also *AV*, ii. 28. 4 ; iii. 23. 6 ; vi. 4. 3 ; 120. 2 ; viii. 7. 2 ; xii. 1. 10 ; *VS*, xix, 47.). Both heaven and earth are regarded as gods and as the parents of gods (*RV*, i. 106. 3 ; 159. 1 ; 185. 4 ; iv. 56. 2 ; vi. 17. 7 ; vii. 53. 1 ; 97. 8 ; x. 11. 9), although they are said to have been generated by gods (*RV* i. 160. 4 ; iii. 32. 8 ; 34. 8 ; 44. 3 ; 59. 1 ; iv. 22. 3 ; 53. 2 ; 56. 3 ; vi. 72. 2 ; vii. 86. 1 ; viii. 6. 5 ; 36. 4 ; 42. 1 ; 82. 2 ; 86. 14 ; ix. 8. 72 ; 90. 1 ; 96. 5 ; x. 29. 6 ; 89. 10 ; 90. 1 ; 121. 5 ; 149. 1 ; *AV*, xii. 1. ; *ŚB*, xiv. 1. 2. 10 ; *TB*, ii. 8. 9. 6 ; *Nir.*, iii. 22).

[55] xii. 1.

[56] iv. 27.

[57] *CGS*, iii, 184.

It is the *Mahābhārata*[58] that for the first time, Mother Earth is brought into relation to Viṣṇu and in course of time, she becomes his consort. It is said that when Mother Earth became burdened with excessive pressure of population, she sank down a hundred *yojanas* and sought the protection of Viṣṇu. Thereupon Viṣṇu took the shape of a boar and lifted her to her own place. A legend of the *Brahmapurāṇa* represents Narakāsura as sprung from the union of Viṣṇu in his boar-form with the goddess Mahī or Chāyā, identified with Mother Earth.[59] In this connexion it should be pointed out that the offspring of the union of the boar-god and the earth is an *Asura* whose 'Aryan' character is certainly doubtful. The said legend is therefore suggestive of the association of agricultural life with the native inhabitants of India who were not 'Aryans'. The association of Viṣṇu with Earth is also found in many places. The *dhyāna* of Viṣṇu describes him as *Indirā-Vasumatī-saṃśobhi-pārśvadvaya*. The early Cālukya Kings, who apparently claimed to be incarnations of Viṣṇu, used the title *Śrī-pṛthivī-vallabha*.[60] The Earth (Bhū), called Vaiṣṇavī, was conceived as the wife of Viṣṇu in many land grants. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*,[61] Earth is variously designated as Medinī, Mādhavī, Dharṇī, etc. Bhū or Mother Earth, identified with Vaiṣṇavī in the *Mahābhārata* and traditionally regarded as the second wife of Viṣṇu, appears again in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[62]

Sītā, the heroine of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is said to have sprung from Mother Earth and in the end she disappears again into her womb.[63] In the ancient hymns of the Vedas, Sītā is simply the furrow which bears crops for men.[64] The derivative meaning of the word *Rāma* is associated with agricultural activities. Sir William Jones informs us that the Peruvians styled their greatest harvest festival *Ramasitoa.*[65] It is ritual that sustains myth : from the ancient agricultural rituals developed the myths of Sītā, and one of such myths was rendered into the form of an epic by the great poet Vālmīki. The similarity of Demeter-Persephone myth with the main story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is too striking to be ignored. The heroine of the epic is born of a field furrow, abducted by a Pluto of the underworld, and after all her adventures she returns to the earth. The story of the quest of Sitā by Rāma and his troop resembles that of Demeter's quest for Persephone or that of the quest of Isis for the body of Osiris. In the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya[66] Sītā is conceived as residing in seeds and plants. Referring to the vegetative aspects of the Mother Goddess, the *Harivaṃśa* says that she is Sītā to the ploughmen.[67] The typical Earth goddess that we come across in the Purāṇas is Śākambharī who is said to have nourished the whole world with the life-sustaining vegetables growing from her own body (i.e. the earth) during a period of drought which lasted for a hundred years.[68] The prototype of this goddess, as we have already seen, may be traced in a seal from Harappa. Jacobi writes : "Devī Śākambharī stands by herself as an independent goddess, though the narrator knows her only as a form of the great goddess (the heroine of the *Devīmāhātmya*), into whom she was absorbed."[69]

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[58] iii. 141.

[59] vii. 110. 14-16. The myth associating Mother Earth with the boar-form of Viṣṇu is surely a development of an older myth evolving from analogical experiences. The corn-god Adonis and his Phrygian counterpart Attis were killed by a boar. Pigs were sacred to the Egyptian Osiris (Herodotus, ii. 47), and the worshippers of Attis; especially the people of Pessinus, abstained from eating swine (Pausanias, vii. 17. 10). At Comana in Pontus, the seat of the goddess Ma, pork was not eaten and swine were not even brought into the city (Strabo, xxii.8.9). The pork taboo of the Muhammedans may be a relic of a similar archaic belief. The manner in which a boar gathers its food resembles that of ploughing. Referring to the Egyptian system of agriculture Herodotus (ii. 14) writes : "When the river (the Nile) has come to its own accord and irrigated the fields, and having irrigated them has subsided, then each man sows his own land and turns swine into it, and when the seed has been trodden in by the swine, he waits for the harvest." Cherry writes in this connexion : "To imitate the hoof prints by means of a stick, would be an easy matter, and if some tradition about the connexion between swine and a good harvest had come down the ages, it may have given rise to the strange idea of the pig being regularly thought as part of the fertility of the land, and becoming sacred to the Great Mother" (quoted in Mackenzie's *EML*).

[60] *IC*, ii, 131-33.

[61] ii. 1, 34 ; vii. 32. 52 ; 110, 14-16.

[62] vii. 72. 42

[63] i, 66. 13-14 ; vii. 110. 14-16.

[64] *RV*, iv. 57 ; *AV*, iii. 17-4 ; *YV*, xii. 69-72 ; *Gobhila GS*, iv. 4. 27-30 ; *Pāraskara GS*, ii. 17. 9-10 ; cf. Hopkins in *JAOS*, xviii, 85n ; Keith. *RPV*, 186, *VBYS*, 306, *SBE*, xxix, 334, xxx, 113-14.

Earth in Rituals

In every primitive agricultural community, the Earth is propitiated with sacrifices and magical rites. The cult of the Earth is recalled in the present Indian marriage rituals and she is also worshipped as a household goddess. Bhūmi or the Earth has always a place in village cults and to this divinity are offered cakes, sweetmeats and fruits.[70] The worship of Mother Earth assumes many varied forms. Throughout Northern India the belief in the sanctity of the Earth is universal. The Earth is believed to possess mystic powers and is regarded as a remedy for disease. There is a widespread belief that man can derive strength from the touch of Mother Earth.

But the Earth is worshipped mainly in connexion with agricultural seasons. Sacrifices are offered and she is asked to be propitious.[71] The Oraon farmer, before transplanting his rice seedlings, makes a libation of wine on the ground to propitiate the Earth.[72] Oraon girls, during the time of sowing, pat the Earth to render her fertile.

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[65] *W*, i, 30

[66] i. 24.

[67] Viṣṇu, iii. 14.

[68] *Devībhāgavata*, vii. 28. 46-47.

[69] *ERE*, v, 217.

[70] Colebrooke, E. *I*, 220.

[71] Hopkins, *RI*, 532.

[72] Roy, *OC*, 142.

We may compare this action to a Greek vase painting interpreted by Jane Harrison, wherein a Satyr is represented as beating the ground to wake the Earth.[73] In Hoshangabad, when the sowing is over, its completion is celebrated by the Macandrī Pūjā, or worship of Mother Earth, a ceremony intended to invoke fertility. "Every cultivator does the work himself, with his family, servants, etc ; no Brāhmaṇa need join in it. At the edge of one of his fields intended for spring harvest, the cultivator puts up a little semicircle or three-sided wall of mud about a foot high, meant to represent a hut. This is covered over with green *khas* grass to represent thatch. At the two ends of the hut two parts of *palāśa* wood are erected, with leaves round the head like those which are put up at marriage. They are tied to the thatch with red thread. In the centre of this little house, which is the temple of Macandrī or Mother Earth, a little fire is made, and milk placed on it to boil in a tiny earthen pot. It is allowed to boil over as a sign of abundance. While this is going on, the ploughmen, who are all collected in a field, drive their bullocks at a trot, striking them wildly ; it is the end of the year's labour for the cattle. The cultivator meanwhile offers a little rice, molasses and saffron to Macandrī, and then makes two tiny holes in the ground to represent granaries ; he drops a few grains in and covers them over ; this is a symbol of prayer, that his granary may be filled from the produce of the land."[74]

In the Eastern Punjab, Mother Earth is called Shaod Mātā whom the farmers invoke to increase their agricultural production and to make their bankers and rulers contented.[75] Before the Kharwars of Mirzapur begin to sow they invoke the Earth.[76] In the month of August they do a special service in her honour, known as the Hariārī Pūjā, or "worship of greenery" at the time of transplanting the rice. In November they do the Khar Pūjā in her honour. They sometimes call her Devī Dāi or Nurse-goddess, and in times of trouble sprinkle rice and pulse in her name on the ground. The Korwas, Pataris, Majhwars and Ghasias call her Dhārti Mātā (Dharitrī) which means 'supporter' or 'upholder'.[77] To propitiate Mother Earth the Khonds offer sacrifices, animal as well as human.[78]

The association of Mother Earth with woman is also found in rain magic. In many parts of India when people suffer from drought, rain is invoked by a number of women who strip themselves naked.[79] Two of them are yoked to a plough while the third holds the handle and a pretence of ploughing is made.[80] During the Gorakhpur famine in 1873-78, there were many accounts of women stripping themselves naked at night and dragging the plough over the fields.[81] Of regular nudity rites in case of the failure of rain we have an instance from Chunar : "The rains of this year held off for a long time, and last night (24th July, 1892) the following ceremony was performed secretly. Between the hours of 9 and 10 P.M. a barber's wife went from door to door and invited all the women to join in ploughing. They all collected in a field from which all males were excluded. Three women of a cultivator's family stripped off all their clothes ; two were yoked to a plough like oxen, and the third held the handle. Then they began to imitate the operation of ploughing. The woman who had the plough in her hand shouted, 'O Mother Earth : Bring parched grain, water and chaff. Our bellies are bursting to pieces from hunger and thirst.' Then the landlord and village accountant approached them and laid down some grain, water and chaff in the field. The women then dressed and went home. By the grace of god the weather changed almost immediately, and we had a good shower."[82]

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[73] *FL*, xxx, 282ff ; *JHS*, xx, 106ff ; cf. Farnell, *CGS*, iii. 26, 112, 205.

[74] Elliot, *SR*, 125.

[75] *NINQ*, i, 173.

[76] *Ibid.*, 41.

[77] Crooke *PRFLNI*, 32.

[78] Macpherson, *MSI*, 117.

[79] Crooke in *JRAnI*, xlx, 237ff.

[80] cf. Roy in *JAnSB*, xii, 920-21.

[81] Crooke, *PRFLNI*, 69.

The same rite was performed in a village near Lucknow on the 30th of July, 1963, and the news appeared in the newspaper with funny journalistic notes and comments in some cases. This curious custom of rain-making has a series of remarkable parallels in Europe. Referring to similar customs prevailing in Europe, Frazer remarks that "such attempts are by no means confined, as the cultivated reader might imagine, to the naked inhabitants of those sultry lands like Central Australia and some parts of Eastern or Southern Africa where for months together the pitiless sun beats down out of a blue and cloudless sky on the parched and gapping earth. They are, or used to be common enough among outwardly civilised folk in the moist climate of Europe."[83] The motive behind this curious rite may easily be explained in terms of imitative magic. Earth requires seed in the form of water for the production of crops, just as a woman requires seed or semen to produce a child.

Probably the curious *Matamaṅgara* rite is based on the idea of communicating the fertility of the Earth to the bride.[84] At the time of marriage 'Lucky Earth' is dug from the village tank, and brought to the house for making the marriage altar.[85] In different parts of Maharashtra, the earth is used to make altars for the rite known as *Grahaśānti* ; in some places, seven kinds of 'Lucky Earth' are brought ; offerings are made to Mother Earth by strewing the ground with rice and flowers.[86] In the Telegu country, five women are sent to the clay pit to bring the earth for the seats of the bride and bridegroom.[87] The first act done when a male child is born among the Nayars is to beat the earth with a cocoanut leaf and in the puberty rites of the Paraiyans the mother strikes the ground behind her child with a flail.[88] In many places of Northern

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[82] *NINQ*, i, 210.

[83] *GB* (ab), 62-78.

[84] Crooke, *RFNI*, 51.

[85] Thurston, *CTSI*, vi, 355.

[86] *BG*, ix (1), 42f ; xviii (1), 141n, xxii, 159.

[87] Padfield, *HH*, 144.

[88] Thurston, *CTSI*, v, 344 ; vi, 93.

India, Mother Earth is designated as Mahāmāi, 'the Great Mother' whose original shrine is an earthen platform with seven knobs of coloured clay at the head.[89]

The Harvest Festivals

Everywhere in India the Devī is mainly concerned with vegetation. In Rajasthan, Gaurī is worshipped as the Earth Goddess concerned with vegetation and fertility. At Udaypur in Rajasthan a festival is held "in hononr of Gauıī or Īśānī, the goddess of abundance, the Isis of Egypt, the Ceres of Greece. Like the Rajput Saturnalia, which it follows, it belongs to the vernal equinox, when nature in these regions proximate to the tropic is in full expanse of her charms, and the matronly Gaurī casts her golden mantle over the verdant Vāsantī, personification of spring. Then the fruits exhibit their promise to the eye ; the *Kohil* fills the ear with melody ; the air is impregnated with aroma and the crimson poppy contrasts with the spikes of golden grain to form a wreath for the beneficent Gaurī. Gaurī is one of the name of Īśā or Pārvatī, wife of the greatest of the gods Mahādeva or Īśvara, who is conjoined with her in these rites, which almost exclusively appertain to women. The meaning of Gaurī is 'yellow', emblematic of the ripened harvest when the votaries of the goddess adore her effigies, which are those of a matron painted the colour of ripe corn."[90] An image of the goddess and a smaller one of her husband are placed together. A small trench is next dug and barley is sown in it. The women dance round it, hand in hand, invoking the blessing of the goddess. The images of the goddess and her husband are decorated and borne to a lake. Here the women carry the image of Gaurī down a marble staircase to the water's edge and dance round it singing love songs.[91]

In the aforesaid ritual no men are allowed to take part. The small trench in which barley is sown resembles what is called the 'Garden of Adonis' which is the custom of planting pots of corn, herbs and flowers as charms to promote the growth of vegetation. Amongst the Oraons and Mundas, Gardens of Adonis are especially cultivated by women in the sowing season.[92] In Rajasthan, the young corn is taken up from the Garden of Adonis and distributed by the women to the men, who wear it in their turbans. In these rites the distribution of the barley shoots to the men point clearly to the desire for offspring along with the rapid growth of vegetation. The same motive probably explains the use of Gardens of Adonis at the marriage festivals. In Madras, seeds of five or nine sorts are mixed and sown in earthen pots ; the bride and bridegroom water the seeds for four days and on the fifth day the seedlings are thrown into a tank or river.[93] In the Himalayan districts of North Western India the cultivators sow barley, maize, pulse or mustard in a basket of earth on the twentyfourth day of the fourth month of the Hindu calendar and on the last day of the month they place the new sprouts among small clay images of Śiva and Pārvatī and worship them. Next day they cut down the green stalks and wear them in their head-dress.[94] At the temple of Padmāvatī, near Pandharpur in Bombay, during the *Navarātra*, a Garden of Adonis is cultivated in front of the pedestal of the goddess.[95] A similar rite is observed before the images of two other goddesses, Ambābāi and Lakhubāi, who also have temples in the same region.[96] In many parts of Northern India we have a festival, the *Jayi* or *Jawara* of Upper India, and the *Bhujaria* of Madhyapradesh, in which, on the seventh day of the bright half of *śrāvaṇa*, grains of barley are sown in a pot of manure and on the first day of the next month, the women and girls take the yellowish-green stalks out and distribute the plants to their male friends who bind them in their turbans.[97] At Sargal this ceremony is observed about the middle of September. On the last day of the function, the women of every family bring their own pots and having laid them on the ground they dance round them. Then taking the pots of sprouting corn they descend to the edge of the water, wash the soil away from the pots, and distribute the young plants among their friends.[98]

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[89] Cunningham *R*, xvii, 141.

[90] Tod, *AAR*, i, 570f.

[91] *Ibid.*, 572.

[92] Dalton, *DEB* 259.

[93] *IA*, xxv, 144 ; Thurston, *ENSI* 2.

Reference should be made in this connexion to the cult of the vegetation goddess Itu who is worshipped exclusively by Bengalee women on the Sunday of the month of *mārgaśirṣa*. She seems to be a goddess since the epithets *Lakṣmī*, *Thākurāṇī*, etc., are attributed to her. The most striking feature of the ritual of Itu is the Garden of Adonis. In an earthen pot rice, pulses and barley are sown and tended for a month; several other plants are also allowed to sprout in the pot. Four small vessels (*ghaṭas*) filled with water which represent the female womb are placed on the pot. The worship takes place on every Sunday and a ceremonial fast is observed by the women of the house. On the last Sunday of the month dedicated to the star *Mṛgaśirā* the Gardens of Adonis are carried to a river or tank by the women and thrown into the water.

Numerous exemples of these Gardens of Adonis have been collected by Frazer. In various parts of Italy and all over Sicily it is still customary to put plants in water or in earth on the Eve of St. John, and from the manner in which they are found to be blooming or fading on St. John's day omens are drawn, especially concerning the fortunes of love. In Prussia, two hundred years ago, the farmers used to send their servants, especially their maids, to gather St. John's wort on Midsummer Eve or midsummer Day. When they had fetched it, the farmer took as many plants as there were persons and stuck them on the wall or between the beams; and it was thought that the preson whose plants did not bloom would soon fall sick or die. The rest of the plants were tied in a bundle, fastened to the end of a pole set up at the gate or wherever the corn would be brought in at the next harvest. The bundle was called Kupola, the ceremony was known as Kupola's festival in which the farmer prayed for a good harvest.[99]

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[94] Atkinson, *HDNWP*, ii, 870.

[95] *BG*, xx, 454.

[96] *Ibid.*, 443, 460,

[97] Crooke, *PRFLNI*, 294.

[98] Murray-Aunsley, in *FL*, v, 253ff.

The Garo priest, at sowing time, invokes Rohimi or Rokeme, the goddess of vegetation.[100] In Western India, various kinds of grain are worshipped in honour of the Mother Goddess, and the mother is invoked to enter the seedlings which are worshipped and finally thrown into water.[101] In Uttar Pradesh, on one of the *Navarātra* days sacred to Devī Durgā, special agricultural rites are performed.[102] Among the Oraons, it is believed that the Corn Mother watches over the threshing floor until the next harvest.[103] The Bhuiyas, Kols and Binds of Uttar Pradesh also worship Hariārī Devī 'Mother of Greenery' during the rainy season, by employing their Bagia priest to sacrifice chickens and to pour a libation of wine on the field after the harvest or before the sowing season.[104] The *Navarātra* ceremony of the Mother Goddess is nothing but a harvest festival. In Kashmir and the Punjab, during the *Navarātra*, plants of barley and wheat are placed in an earthen pot and offered to the Mother Goddess. In the Deccan, the goddess is conceived as residing in seeds and plants. Throughout South India the vegetation goddess is worshipped as *amma* or mother.

Original character of the Śākta Devī

In fact, in every place of the world, the Mother Goddess is mainly concerned with vegetation and fertility. In Germany the corn is very commonly personified under the name of the Corn Mother. She plays an important part in the harvest customs. The last sheaf of corn variously called 'Corn-Mother', 'Harvest Mother', 'Great Mother', 'Ground Mother', 'Old Woman', etc., is often shaped and dressed as a woman, and carried with dance and song to the farmhouse. The Peruvians believed all useful plants to be animated by a Divine Mother who causes their growth. The Corn-Mother of Europe has her match in the Rice-Mother of Indonesia. The Javanese think that rice is under the special guardianship of a female spirit called Saning Sari, who is conceived as so closely knit up with the plant that the rice often goes by her name, as with the Romans the corn might be called Ceres. This so called 'Mother of Rice' is the occasion of a number of ceremonies observed at the planting and harvesting of the rice as well as during its preservation in the barn. The ideas on which these customs rest are not confined to any one race, but naturally suggest themselves to all untutored peoples engaged in agriculture.[105] "It is probable, therefore, that Demeter and Persephone, those stately and beautiful figures in Greek mythology, grew out of the same simple beliefs and practices which still prevail among our modern peasantry, and that they were represented by rude dolls made out of the yellow sheaves on many a harvest-field long before their breathing images were wrought in bronze and marble by the master hands of Phidias and Praxiteles."[106]

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[99] *AAO*, 194 ff.

[100] Playfair, *G*, 93.

[101] *BG*, ix (1), 392.

[102] Gupte, *HHC*, 181ff.

[103] Roy, *OC*, 441f.

[104] Crooke, *TCNWPO*, i, 83.

Now let us refer to the household Lakṣmī rituals, or the rituals of Ceres (Śrī), observed by the agriculturists of Bengal. Lakṣmī is one of the Navapatrikā goddesses, especially connected with rice. The goddess is symbolised by a certain quantity of rice kept in a basket, and on the basket over the heap of rice a wooden pot popularly called *gāchkauṭā* or tree-case, is placed. It is shaped like a womb and smeared with vermilion. The basket itself is decorated by cowrie shells. On the appointed days the pot is installed on a wooden throne or platform by the oldest lady of the house. The said ritual is performed four times in a year. In the month of Bhādra (August-September) on the eve of the reaping of the *āsu* brand of rice the ritual of Bhādralakṣmī is performed. The ritual is again performed in the evening of the annual festival of the goddess Kālī held on the next new-moon day of the Durgā worship (October-November). This ritual thus takes place on the eve of the reaping of the *āmana* rice. Again, in the month of Pauṣa (December-January) with the reaping of the *āmana* brand of rice, the ritual of Pauṣalakṣmī is observed, while in the month of Caitra (March-April) when the winter crops ripen, the ritual of Caitralakṣmī takes place.

Of other varieties of the Lakṣmī ritual the following may be noted. On the full moon day, immediately after the worship of the goddess Durgā, the ritual of Kojāgari Lakṣmī takes place. This goddess is very popular in East Bengal and in every Hindu house her image is worshipped. According to popular belief, the goddess comes at night and knocks at the door of every house. Her worshippers keep the lamps burning and wait for her arrival throughout the night. The goddess is also worshipped in West Bengal but not with so much grandeur. Probably this Lakṣmī is an offshoot of the goddess Durgā and in the capacity of a Corn Mother her relationship with the latter resembles that of Persephone with Demeter. On the last day of the month of Kārtika (middle of October) we have the ritual of Muṭh-lakṣmī in which a few stalks of rice are carried from the field to the house. One should not fail to note in this connexion that the vegetation god Kārtikeya is also worshipped on that very day. In the next month the same stalks are worshipped in connexion with the Navānna-lakṣmī or the 'Lakṣmī of the New Rice.' Mention has already been made of the ritual of Itu-lakṣmī.

Reference may be made in this connexion to the *Kula* trees worshipped by the Śāktas of Bengal, for they believe that the Mother Goddess dwell in the trees. The *Kula* trees are: *Aśoka*, *Keśara*, *Bilva*, *Karṇikāra*, *Cūta*, *Nameru*, *Piyāla*, *Sinduvāra*,

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[105] Frazer, *GB* (ab), 399-424.

[106] *Ibid.*, 420.

Kadamba, *Maruvaka*, *Campaka*, *Śleṣmātaka*, *Karañja*, *Nimba*, *Aśvattha*, *Vaṭa*, *Uḍumbara* *Dhātri* and *Ciṇca*.[107] The worship of Navapatrikā, which is an important aspect of Durgā worship, clearly shows that the goddess is concerned with vegetation. The Navapatrikā consists of nine leaves or plants : *Rambhā*, *Kaccvī*, *Haridrā*, *Jayantī*, *Bilva*, *Dāḍima*, *Aśoka*, *Mānaka* and *Dhānya*.[108] Each of the plants is associated with a goddess : *Rambhā* with Brahmāṇī, *Kaccvī* with Kālikā, *Haridrā* with Durgā, *Jayantī* with Kārttikī, *Bilva* with Śivā, *Dāḍima* with Raktadantikā, *Aśoka* with Śokarohitā, *Mānaka* with Cāmuṇḍā, and *Dhānya* with Lakṣmī.[109] The nine goddesses presiding over the nine plants are collectively called Navadurgā. These plants are tied up with an Aparajitā creeper, bathed in a tank or a river, and then worshipped independently. Thus in the Durgā worship, which is the most popular expression of the mother-cult of our times, a very close relation between the Mother Goddess and the vegetation forces of nature may clearly be observed.

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[107] *Śāktānandataraṅgiṇī* (xv), 270-71 ; cf. *Kulacūḍāmaṇi* (iv) 20.

[108] *Rambhā Kaccvī Haridrā ca Jayantī Bilvaḍārimau |*
Aśoko Mānakaścaiva Dhānyañca Navapatrikā ||

[109] cf. *Matsyasūkta*, quoted in *Prāṇatoṣaṇī*, v.

CHAPTER THREE

TWO ASPECTS OF THE SAME MYSTERY

"So intimate appeared to be the relation between the processes of birth and generation and those of fertility in general that the two aspects of the same 'mystery' found very similar modes of ritual expression under prehistoric conditions."[1] Of such 'ritual expressions' the erotic rites are really significant, for they are employed as expedients to increase the generative powers of nature represented by the Mother Earth. To bring natural productivity under control the primitive people attached supreme importance to the human generative organs and employed sexual union, or its imitation, as a means to achieve their end. The worship of *liṅga* and *yoni*, i.e. the male and female organs, was nothing but a development of such erotic rites of fertility, the former symbolising the act of cultivation and the latter, the fruit-bearing earth.

Liṅga and Yoni

The worship of the human generative organs was widespread among the primitive peoples and its relics are still found in the backward countries all over the world.[2] Not only among the backward Asio-Africans, but among the pagan Europeans as well the worship of the phallus was widespread.[3] Even in the middle ages phallic worship was practised in France and Belgium.[4] Pausanias observes that at Cylbene "the image of Hermes which the people of the place revere is nothing but the male organ of generation erect on the pedestal."[5] At Syracuse, on the day of Thesmophoria, cakes of sesame and honey representing the female organ were offered to Demeter.[6] At Roman marriages, the bride was required to sit upon the image of Priapus (Mutunnus), the phallic god.[7]

Various phallic symbols representing the goddess and her consort have been found in the ancient tracts of the Aegean, in Egypt and in the land of the Semites. At

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[1] James, *PR*, 172.

[2] Ellis, *ESP*, 41f ; *YSP*, 65 ; Johnston, *RC*, 405 ; Aston, *S*, 71 88ff.

[3] Grimm, *TM*, 212, 1354.

[4] Hartland, pp, i, 63.

[5] Harrison, *PSGR*, 122.

[6] Farnell, *CGS*, iii, 99.

[7] Augustine, *De Civ. dei*, vii, 24 ; Keifer, *SIR*, 114ff.

Mohenjo-daro we come across the models of *liṅga* and *yoni* which were used probably as life bestowing amulets,[8] while at Harappa a number of conical *liṅgas*, representing the male organ, and large undulating rings of stones, thought to symbolise the female principle, have been recorded.[9] The phallic cult was thus deeply ingrained in the prehistoric substratum of the Hindu religion of the third millenium B.C. The origin of the *Yoni* cult of the later Tantras must therefore be sought in the prehistoric ruins of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

The Tantric *śrīcakra* is nothing but the representation of female generative organ.[10] The word Tantra is derived from the root *tan*, the most simple meaning of which is 'to spread' 'to multiply'. In fact, the Tantric practices are older than the Tantric texts themselves, and in view of this we may argue that the original purpose of the Tantric rituals was to increase productivity, both natural and human. Originally the male and female organs were worshipped as symbols of procreation and fruitfulness.

Primarily the *liṅga* was the symbol of the act of cultivation while the *yoni* represented Mother Earth. This finds support in a statement of Manu : *iyaṃ bhūmirhi bhūtānāṃ śāśvatī yonirucyate*.[11] One should not forget in this connexion that the primitive hoe was designed to resemble the male organ while the word *lāṅgala* (plough) is closely associated with *liṅga*.[12] Later on, when metaphysical values were attributed to them, the principles of the cult of *liṅga* and *yoni* came to be interpreted in terms of a dualistic philosophical outlook.

The woman, being the mother of the race, is essentially the life producer, and her male partner the begetter. In the matter of procreation the union of the two is essential physiologically. But the agent about whose maternal functions there is no doubt is the woman. Her male partner was at first supplementary because his precise function in relation to conception and birth was less obvious and less clearly understood. In primitive society there was some uncertainty about paternity.[13] But this element of doubt could not obtain in the case of. the mother. Therefore, the woman and "her organs and attributes have been the life-giving symbols *par excellence* even since their first appearance in the Middle East and the Europe at the beginning of upper Palaeolithic."[14]

Agriculture and Sex Rites

While dealing with the *liṅga* and *yoni* cult we have referred to the fact that the association of sexual union with agriculture was universal. By imitating the art of human procreation the primitive people tried to increase the generative powers of nature. In many places the harvest festivals are therefore marked by sex rites.

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[8] Marshall, *MIC*, pls, xiii, 1, 7 ; xiv, 2, 4.

[9] Vats, *EH*, 51, 53, 55ff, 140.

[10] Bhandarkar, *CW*, iv, 209.

[11] ix. 37,

[12] Bagchi, *PPI*, 10, 14.

[13] See Chap. v.

[14] James, *PR*, 153. In the light of recent evidence it appears that among the palaeolithic inhabitants of Europe female figurines were first fashioned as fertility charms giving excessive prominence to the sexual features. The figurines really represent the embryonic stage preceding those of the Earth Mother and her many various counterparts. See Chap. vii.

In Assam, the Bihu festival "has always been claimed by the female sex as a period of considerable licence ; and the exercise of their freedom does not seem to be attended with any stain, blemish or loss of reputation."[15] Among the Naga tribes of Manipur, a month after the paddy is sown, and again before the first fruits are reaped, a festival is held, when a tug of war takes place, the women and the girls pulling against the men and the boys. The object of this is to take the omens for the future of the crops. At the same time, it is also intended to assure the future of the crops. This rite is attended by considerable licence.[16] The Bhuiyas of Orissa have a festival called *Magh Porai* at which they give way to promiscuity and intoxication. It continues for three days "during which all respect for blood relation are set at nought, and even sisters and brothers make indecent jokes regarding each other."[17] The Hos of Chotanagpur have every year a great feast in January, "when the granaries are full of grain, and the people, to use their own expression, full of devilry. They have a strange notion that at this period, men and women are so overcharged with vicious propensities, that it is absolutely necessary for the safety of the person to let off the stream by allowing for a time full vent to the passions. The festival, therefore, becomes a Saturnalia, during which servants forget their duty to their masters, children their reverence for parents, men their respect for women, and women all notions of modesty, delicacy and gentleness."[18]

Dalton says : "It should appear that most hill tribes have found it necessary to promote marriage by stimulating intercourse between the sexes at particular season of the year."[19] The *Holi* festival, which is celebrated in some places in honour of the goddess Vāsantī, is an occasion on which "the most licentious debauchery and disorder reign throughout every class of society. It is the regular Saturnalia of India. Persons of the greatest responsibility, without regard to rank or age, are not ashamed to take part in the orgies which mark the season of the year."[20] In ancient times the festival was called *Vasantotsava* and the noblest princesses danced in public in honour of the goddess of love.[21] "Most of the observers of the feast", says Natesa Ṣastri, "imagine that the object of their worship is Cupid and that the mock fun they observe are on account of Kāma, the god of love".[22] But Crooke says that the original intention of the *Holi* festival is to promote the fertility of men, animals and crops.[23]

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[15] Butler, *TAPA*, 226.
[16] Hodson, *NTM*, 168.
[17] Macmillan in *CR*, ciii, 188.
[18] Dalton, *DEB*, 196.
[19] *Ibid.*, 300.
[20] Rousselet, *INP*, 173.
[21] Oman, *BTMI*, 241f.
[22] *HFFC*, 44ff.
[23] *FL*, xxv, 183.

The Punjas of Jeypore have a festival in the first month of the new year in which men and women assemble freely. Some of their groups observe this festival which is kept up for a month, by both sexes mixing promiscuously and taking partners as their choice directs.[24] The Kotas of the Nilgiri hills have a similar festival of continuous licentiousness.[25] Similar festivals are also current among the tribes of Khondistan.[20] In the harvest festival of the Santals "five days are spent in drinking, dancing and debauching. It is significant that at the commencement the village headman gives a talk to the village people, in which he says that they may act as they like sexually, only being careful not to touch certain women : otherwise they may amuse themselves. The village people reply that they are putting twelve balls of cotton in their ears and will not pay any heed to, nor hear or see."[27] Dalton remarks that when they begin to sow they feel within themselves the weight of seeds, because in primitive consciousness sowing in the field and that in the women are closely linked up.

Tribes of Central America employ some persons for the purpose of sexual union on the eve of sowing. The Musquakis select a man and a woman and send them to the field where they are to perform sexual intercourse. The Peruvians observe celebacy until the harvest and at the time of reaping they openly satisfy their mating instinct. Similar customs are in vogue among the backward inhabitants of Chili, New Mexico, Nikaragua and other Latin American countries. Referring to these customs Briffault observes that "the belief that sexual act assists the promotion of an abundant harvest of the earth's fruits, and is indispensable to secure it is universal in the lower phases of culture."[28] Frazer also cites similar examples from Central America, Java, New Guinea and many other countries and concludes that "at the present day it might perhaps be vain to look in civilised Europe for customs of this sort observed for the explicit purpose for promoting the growth of vegetation. But ruder races in other parts of the world have consciously employed the intercourse of sexes as a means to ensure the fruitfulness of the earth ; and some rites which are still, or were till lately, kept up in Europe can be reasonably explained only as stunted relics of a similar practice...It was an important social duty in default of which it was not lawful to sow the seeds."[29]

Reference should also be made in this connexion to the five day festival of the Thesmophoria, celebrated only by women in honour of the two *thesmophori*, that is, law-bringing goddesses, Demeter and Persephone. At the bottom of the festival was the memory of Demeter who was not only the inventress of agriculture but a guiding deity of marriage and procreation. Sowing and begetting children being identical among the Greeks in conception and linguistic usage, the festival was celebrated in the month of sowing, called in Crete and Sicily, 'thesmophoris', in Boeotia 'Damatrios', in Attica 'Pyanepsion', corresponding more or less to our October.

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24. Shortt, *HRSI*, ii, 11ff.
25. *idem* in *TES* (NS), vii, 282.
26. Campbell, *WTK*, 52ff.
27. *JAS* (S), xix, 7.
28. *M*, iii, 196ff.
29. *GB* (ab), 135-136.

According to Herodotus this festival had already been widespread among the original population of Greece[30] and was common throughout Hellas and extended to the most distant colonies of Thrace, Sicily, Asia Minor, and on the shores of the Black Sea. The festival was marked by indiscriminate sexual intercourse. All the women desiring totake part in the festival were obliged to abstain from sexual intercourse for nine days before, so that whipped up by this long abstinence, they might be able to take part in erotic orgies with less restraint.[31]

Sacred Prostitution

The origin of the Tantric sex rites are therefore to be sought in the aforesaid beliefs and customs. These are more or less universal, and there is a considerable degree of unity among men in respect of such beliefs and rituals. In fact, erotic practices associated with the Devī cult appear to be older than the Tantric texts themselves.

But before dealing with this subject it is necessary to draw the attention of the readers to the very interesting custom of religious prostitution which was once current in different parts of the world.[32] At Babylon every woman was bound at least once in her life to dedicate her body to a stranger in the temple of the goddess Mylitta. She was not allowed to return home till one of the strangers threw a coin on her lap took her with him beyond the holy ground.[33] Girls of Cyprus prostituted themselves before marriage and spent a portion of their income as offering to Venus for the preservation of their chastity in time to come.[34] Religious prostitution was current among the women of Heliopolis or Baalbec in Syria, and this custom was prohibited by a law enacted by Constantine.[35] Similar customs also prevailed in the temple of Aphrodite at Corinth and in many parts of Western Asia.[36] Relics of a similar custom may be traced in a Jātaka story,[37] while in Southern India religious prostitution in the temples was legally abolished only a few years ago. Among the Armenians the goddess Anaitis was worshipped with sacred prostitution even by damsels belonging to the highest families.[38] The custom of sacred prostitution survived in Lydia in a later period of the Greco-Roman culture. In a Lydian inscription, belonging to the second century, found at Trallies, we find a lady called Aurelia Aemilia who declares with pride that she had prostituted herself in the temple service in the same manner as her mother and grandmother had done.[39] In the epic of *Gilgamesh*, Ishtar is represented as gathering round her unchaste girls and harlots, and as a goddess of prostitution the epithet 'consecrated' is applied to her.[40] Lactantius says that Aphrodite or Venus who is generally identified with Ishtar or Astarte instituted the art of courtezanship and taught women in Cyprus to seek gain by prostitution, which she commanded for the purpose that she alone might not appear unchaste.[41]

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[30] ii. 71.

[31] Licht, *SLAG*, 110-11.

[32] Prostitution has something to do with the gooddess cults in India. Even today 'sacred earth' of a harlotry is required in Durgā worship.

[33] Herodotus, i, 199 ; Strabo, xvi. 1. 10.

[34] Justin, *HP*, xviii. 5. A similar custom still prevails in some parts of Southern India. Enthoven, *ESM*, ii, 8.

[35] This is mentioned by the Ecclesiastical historian Socrates and also by Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*. See Westermarck, *HHM*, i, 209.

[36] Farnell, *CGS*, ii, 746 ; Jastrow, *RBA*, 475ff.

[37] Cowell, *J*, v, 141.

Various theories have been set forth to explain this custom. Its origin is variously sought in communal marriages,[42] removal of some dangerous taboos,[43] puberty rites,[44] etc. Westermarck thinks that the dedication of the body to a stranger was evidently meant not to ensure the fruitfulness of the earth, but the fertility of the woman herself and probably also an easy delivery. The word Mylitta is said to come from *Mu'allidtu*, which means midwife. A stranger is, according to early ideas, almost a supernatural being, his blessings being particularly efficacious.[45] Hartland also says that in primitive ideas a stranger was regarded as a semi-supernatural being.[46] Westermarck's explanation was subsequently accepted by Van Gennep.[47]

On the other hand, Manhardt explains this custom as a form of vegetation ritual,[48] and his explanation has been accepted by Frazer who wants to interpret the significance of this custom in terms of the sex rites associated with the Mother Goddess cult. The Egyptian Isis was originally a Corn Mother who was not only the creatress of the fresh vérdure of vegetation that covered the earth, but the green corn-field itself, personified as a goddess.[49] Cybele, the Phrygian Mother of the Gods, was also originally a Corn Mother. The union of Cybele and Attis, like that of Aphrodite and Adonis or Ishtar and Tammuz, were marked by sex festivals. The union of Demeter and Zeus was imitated by men and women in the sex festivals at Eleusis in order 'to make the fields wave with yellow corns.'[50] "We may, therefore, conclude," says Frazer, "that a great Mother Goddess, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature, was worshipped under different names but with a substantial similarity of myth and ritual by many peoples of Western Asia ; that associated with her was a lover, or rather a series of lovers, divine yet mortal, with whom she mated year by year, their commerce being deemed essential to the propagation of animals and plants, each in their several kind ; and further, the fabulous union of the divine pair was stimulated and, as it were, multiplied on earth by the real, though temporary union of the human sexes at the sanctuary of the goddess for the sake of thereby ensuring the fruitfulness of the ground and the increase of man and beast."[51]

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[38] Strabo, xi, 14. 16.

[39] Ramsey, *CBP*, i, 95.

[40] Sandars, *EG*, 83ff.

[41] *DI*, 1. 7.

[42] Lubbock, *OC*, 434.

[43] Farnell, *GB*, 279-81.

[44] Hartland, in *AEPEBT*, 313.

[45] *ODMI*, i, 583 ff.

[46] *RB*, 285ff.

[47] *RP*, 242ff.

[48] *WF*, ii, 238ff.

[49] Wallis-Budge, *GE*, ii, 216.

[50] For the Eleusian Mysteries see Ch. ii.

Vāmadevya Sāman

The sacred prostitution practised in various parts of the ancient world was therefore a custom based upon some objective understanding, a custom quite in accordance with the primitive belief in the identical relation of Earth and Woman. In comparatively advanced societies, these customs did not cease to exist, although it is doubtful whether they really survived with their original significance.

In India, the synthesis of the Aryan and the non-Aryan began to take place when the later portions of the *Ṛgveda* were being composed. By this time the pastoral Ṛgvedic Aryans had become a settled people and were engaged in agriculture. As happens in the case of Higher Pastorals all over the world, they absorbed agricultural rites, some of which were obviously sexual in character. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* we come across numerous passages in which sexual union is identified with sacrifice.[52] The conceptions of 'productive pairs'[53] and fruitful semen[54] occur in many passages. In the white *Yajurveda* we come across a hymn which clearly shows that sexual union was employed to promote agricultural production.[55] The legend describes an agricultural rite in which the queen (Vāvātā) and the priest (Udgātā) are allowed to have intercourse in the presence of a number of sages. In all the verses sexual union is brought in relation to agricultural operations.[56] In the Vāmadevya Sāman of the *Chāndogya upaniṣad*[57] (the term reminds us of *Vāmācāra*) we come across the following: "One summons; that is a *Hiṃkāra*. He makes request; that is a *Prastāvah*. Together with the woman he lies down; that is an *Udgītha*. He lies upon the woman; that is a *Pratihāra*. He comes to an end; that is a *Nidhāna*. He comes to a finish; that is a *Nidhāna*. This is the *Vāmadevya Sāman* as woven upon copulation. He who knows thus this *Vāmadevya Sāman* as woven upon copulation, comes to copulation, reaches a full length of life, lives long, becomes great in offspring and cattle, great in fame. One should never abstain from any woman. That is his rule".[58]

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[51] *AAO*, 34-35. At Chinsurah, in the Hooghly District, West Bengal, where I live, the god Kārttikeya is worshipped especially by the prostitutes. The ritural-use of the 'Garden of Adonis' in his cult suggests that he is primarily a god of vegetation. (In different parts of East Bengal we have Kārttikeya-rituals performed by married women for the purpose of offspring and vegetation, and in these rituals Gardens of Adonis are cultivated. His association with pregnancy and childbirth is indicated by the fact that tradition makes him the husband of Saṣṭhī, the protectress of children). The consort of the Kārttikeya of Chinsurah is Sarasvatī who is also worshipped especially by the prostitutes, not because she is the goddess of learning but because, in popular belief, though not in actual condition, she is unmarried and of doubtful moral character. (It is interesting to note in this connexion that in some South Indian sculptures this goddess is represented as seated on a peacock which is the emblem of Kārttikeya). The worship of Kārttikeya by the prostitutes at Chinsurah is now a dying cult. In my early years I saw as many as twenty images worshipped by different groups and now there is only one. The only surviving ritual of the cult is the Garden of Adonis ; others have sunk into oblivion.

[52] i. 9. 2. 7 ; i. 9. 2. 11 ; vi. 3. 1. 28 ; vi. 4. 3. 7 ; vi. 6. 2. 8 ; vi. 6. 1. 11 ; etc. See *SBE* xii, xli.

[53] ii. 4. 4. 21 ; ii. 5. 1. 11 ; v. 1. 3. 19 ; v. 2. 5. 8 ; vi. 3. 1. 30 ; vi. 3. 3. 38 ; vii. 5. 1. 6 ; etc.

[54] i. 7. 2. 14 ; i. 9. 2. 7 ; ii. 3. 1. 32f ; v. 3. 3 7f ; vi. 3. 3. 18 ; vii. 4. 2. 24 ; etc.

[55] *VS*, xxiii. 22-31.

These examples prove that in olden times sexual union was employed for a definite purpose; and the purpose was to increase the generative power of nature, especially in the sphere of agriculture. Such union was not then regarded as a sign of moral depravity; on the other hand, it was a sacred act. In many scattered passages of the Upaniṣads, the woman is conceived as the sacrificial fire, her lower portion as the sacrificial wood, the genitalia as the flames, the penetration as the carbon and the sexual union as the spark[59] The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad* says that the lower portion (*upastha*) of a woman is to be conceived as the sacrificial alter (*vedi*), the pubic hairs (*lomāni*) as the sacrificial grass, the outerskin (*bahirścarman*) as the floor for the pressing of the soma plants (*adhiṣavana*), and the two labia of the vulva (*muskau*) as the inmost fire. He who remembers this during copulation gets the reward of the *Vājapeya* sacrifice.[60] The same text goes on so far as to state that, if a woman refuses sexual union, she must be forced to do so.[61]

In Tantricism special importance is attached to the rituals centering round the female genital organ and these rituals are called *Bhaga-Yāga* or *Latā-Sādhanā*. We have already noted that a similar emphasis on the female organ is expressed in the Tantric *Yantras*. From the earliest times the word *bhaga* was used in Sanskrit in different senses, and in subsequent ages its meaning underwent several changes. In the Vedas, we have references to a god called Bhaga who is said to have been the son of Aditi.[62] The word also connoted a certain quality, the exact nature of which must be clarified. It is said that all men, rich and poor, desire *bhaga* from the god of the same name and also from other gods like Indra, Savitṛ, Soma, Pṛthivī and Bṛhaspati.[63] Now, what was the quality or thing that was called *bhaga* ? The answer is obviously connected with the original meaning of the said term, which is sexual organ. The quality symbolised by the term *bhaga* is fertility, both human and natural. The term also denotes the human generative organ. It occurs in this sense at least once in the *Ṛgveda*.[64] According to the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*,[65] Bhaga is the guardian deity of the star Uttaraphalgunī, and according to the evidence furnished by the *Mahābhārata*[66] and the *Rāmāyaṇa*[67] the appearance of the said star is very favourable for marriage, that is, for procreation or productive purpose.

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[56] My esteemed friend Sri Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, who is the first scholar to point out the ritual significance of the said hymn, makes the following free rendering of the relevant portions: *Raise her up as you carry a load on the mountains*; *then let her middle portion be expanded. As (the grain) is dried in cold wind.* (Uvaṭa's commentary: The Udgātā unites with the Vāvātā. He askes some one, 'Raise this woman. Raise up this Vāvātā high'. How? As a load is carried up clasping it at the middle, fix her high up. As in the place, i.e. so raise her that the waist and the genital region of this Vāvātā may be extended. So hold her as it may expand. As a peasant, drying the paddy (seeds) quickens the sowing by taking these and releasing). *Raise him up as you carry a load on the mount. Then let his middle region begin to function. As (the grain) is dried in cool wind.* (Uvaṭa's commentary: In reply, Vāvātā told the Udgātā: 'Thou, too, should be made to act in a similar way'. Here the female is playing the role of the male. As load is carried uphill. Then let his middle region to function, i.e. be engaged in the reproductive function. Then press him down. As a peasant drying the barley (seeds) in cool air quickens the sowing by taking these and releasing). *L*, 318-19.

[57] ii. 13.

[58] Hume's tr.

[59] Ch. v, v. 8. 1-2; Br. V., vi. 2. 13.

[60] vi. 4. 3.

[61] vi. 4. 6-7.

Later on, *bhaga* was looked upon as the sum total of all the six forms of material prosperity, called *ṣaḍaiśvarya*. In view of what we have said above it is not difficult to understand how the word denoting the female organ came to mean the source of all material wealth. We have seen that sexual union was related to agricultural operations and that, even in the age of the Vedas, it was employed for some definite purpose.

The Priest and the Queen

We have referred to the Vāvātā-Udgātā legend[68] which describes an agricultural rite in which the queen (Vāvātā) and the priest (Udgātā) are allowed to have intercourse in the presence of a number of persons. This is really significant. Frazer says that kingship in agricultural societies originated from the magical functions which archaic monarchs were expected to discharge on behalf of the community. The sacred priest-kings have evolved from primitive magicians and medicine-men, their functions as war-leaders and others being nothing but of secondary consequence. The king's tenure of office was limited in early times to a prescribed period at the end of which he was put to death.[69] The myth of Urvaśī and Purūravas, as Kosambi points out,[70] clearly suggests

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[62] *RV*, vii. 41 ; *VS*, xxxiv, 35f ; *AV*, iii. 16.

[63] *RV*, ii 17. 7 ; iii. 30 ; iii. 62. 11 ; vi. 41. 2 ; *VS*, v. 7 ; *AV*, xii. 1. 5 ; xix. 4. 3.

[64] x. ii. 6 ; Cf. *Nir.*, iii. 16.

[65] i. 1. 24.

[66] i. 8. 16.

[67] i. 72. 73.

[68] *Supra*. *VS*, xxiii. 22-31

[69] See *MOK* ; *DG*.

[70] *MR*, 42ff.

13029

that Purūravas was killed at a sacrifice after a ritual-intercourse with Urvaśī. As is natural to expect, this rite must have passed through many changes in subsequent ages. In the Aśvamedha sacrifice, in which the original purpose of the aforesaid rite is distorted to a considerable extent, we find the use of horse in the place of the priest-king. The queen had to lie with the horse. The killing of the king or priest was originally nothing but an incident in the women's ritual cycle. "It was necessary for the queens to conceive in order that the earth might bear fruit. Their sexual life was a cycle of mimetic magic. Accordingly, the procreation was imagined as a god—in the first instance, no doubt, the god of the moon, which in primitive thought is the cause of pregnancy in women and fertility in the soil ; and after serving their purpose the men in whom this god was embodied were put to death. They had to die in order that the crops might live. This ritual, which inspired the myths of Ishtar and Tammuz, Isis and Osiris, Venus and Adonis, is the precursor of the Greek sacred marriage, in which it was apopted to the conditions of monogamy."[71]

Pūrṇakumbha : *The Womb*

The most popular mother Goddess of Bengal is Durgā, whose worship is, in fact, the rituals of *Navapatrikā* or nine plants referred to in the second chapter. In one such ritual, a *yantra* called *Sarvatobhadramaṇḍala* is drawn upon the ground. It is simply a Tantric diagram showing the pictures of female generative organ. Then a *pūrṇaghaṭa* is to be placed on the said diagram. This *pūrṇaghaṭa* or *pūrṇakumbha* is an earthen vessel filled with water. It is nothing but a symbol of the female womb. The figure of a baby called *Sinduraputtalī* is drawn on the surface of the vessel. The open mouth of the *pūrṇaghaṭa* is covered with five kinds of leaves, and a cocoanut, smeared with vermilion, is placed on it. It is a simple fertility rite by which the plants are brought into contact with the female reproductive organ, evidently to ensure multiplication.[72]

That the main purpose of the *yantra* and *pūrṇaghaṭa*, referred to above, is to identify natural fertility with human fertility, so that the productivity of nature becomes increased by the imitation of female reproductivity, finds expression in a piece of sculpture of the Mother Goddess found at Nagarjunikonda which depicts the lower portion of a female figure in a sitting posture with legs doubled up and wide apart and feet pointing outwards. The bifurcated lower portion of the vulva is very prominently indicated, while the area between the broad belt below the navel and the upper portion of the vulva is used to make a *pūrṇaghaṭa* highly decorated with an ornamental belt around it.[73] In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,[74] *ghaṭa* or *kumbha* is equated with the wide distribution of this type of figurines is suggestive of the wide range of popularity of the protrectress-deities.

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[71] Thomson, *SAGS*, i, 158-59.

[72] Chattopadhyaya, *L*, 294f.

[73] *EI*, xxix, 138-39.

[74] xiii. 8. 3. 3.

In Bengal, the goddess Ṣaṣṭhī protects the infants, and is worshipped on the sixth day after their birth.[15] The village folk set the goddess under a tree—in most cases, the jack-tree (a symbol of abundance because of its capacity to produce plenty of jack-fruits). The goddess, generally represented by a stone, is invoked for safeguarding the mother and the child against the influence of malevolent spirits. The cowrie shell, regarded as a symbol of the Mother Goddess on account of its apparent similarity with the female generative organ, is used as an amulet which children carry in order to protect themselves against evil spirits. In the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*,[16] we find a legend centering round this goddess. There was a very pious king named Priyavrata, in the times of Svāyambhūva Manu, who remained childless for a long time. So he had the *Putreṣṭi-yajña* performed by Kaśyapa, in consequence of which his wife, after twelve years of conception gave birth to a dead child. The king, naturally shocked, carried the child to the cremation ground. Suddenly a goddess appeared before him and saying that she was the daughter of Brahmā and the wife of Kārttikeya, revived the child. The king was so pleased that he promised to institute her worship and popularise it among the people.

The worship of the goddess Ṣaṣṭhī has been going on since then. She is conceived as the sixth part of *Prakṛti* and the wife of Skanda. When Skanda was born, various kinds of terrifying phenomena occurred. The gods, having heard the prowess of Skanda, advised Indra to kill him without delay. Indra sent the Divine Mothers to kill the child. But when they met Skanda they liked him. He received them with respect. The Mothers therefore protected him. When Indra saw that his plan had failed, he led a huge celestial army against Skanda. The gods were defeated and surrendered to him. Indra then hurled his thunderbolt at Skanda piercing his right side. At once Viśākha emerged from the wound. Seeing him Indra was frightened and sought his protection. A number of female spirits came into being when Skanda was struck with the thunderbolt. By Skanda's blessings they became the protectresses of children. They are known as Kākī, Hālimā, Mālinī, Vṛnhilā, Āryā, Palālā and Vaimitrā. Skanda was married to Devasenā who was also known by such names as Ṣaṣṭhī, Lakṣmī, Āśā, Sukhapradā, Sinivālī, Kuhū, Sadvṛtti and Aparājitā.[17]

The goddess Dhelāi Caṇḍī is worshipped in different parts of Bengal. She lives in a sacred grove and rags are tied to the branches of its trees to secure the birth of children. The goddess Vanadurgā is worshipped on behalf of children in many villages of the Mymensingh district. The goddess Chathi or Ṣaṣṭhī is worshipped by the Chamar caste scattered over the regions to the north of the Vindhyas as the protectress resembled the Indian goddess Ṣaṣṭhī. She is generally depicted surrounded by numerous children and her chariot is drawn by cats.[6]

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[15] For the cult of this goddess see *MI.*, xxviii, 1948, 152ff.

[16] *Prakṛtikhaṇḍa*, xliii ; cf. *Devībhāgavata*, ix, 26..

[17] *Mbh.*, iii, 223-228.

Sometimes such deities were regarded as malevolent spirits, especially where the rate of infant mortality was high. They had to be appeased so that they might not cause any harm to the children. In the *Mahābhārata* we come across Rākṣasī Jarā who was the protectress of children. She was worshipped in two ways; by painting or carving her figure along with those of her children on house walls, and by offering her flowers, incense and various eatables.[7] She was the city goddess of Magadha and her legend centred round the birth of Jarāsandha. King Bṛhadratha of Magadha had two wives. But he failed to obtain a son, even by means of auspicious rites and sacrifices. At last a great sage called Caṇḍakauśika gave him a fruit. His queens, dividing that single fruit into two parts, ate it. Sometime after, when the season came, each of the queens brought forth a fragmentary body. Each fragment had one eye, one leg, one arm, half a stomach and half a face. Both the halves were thrown on the road and were accidentally seen by Rākṣasī Jarā who took the halves and united them. As soon as it was done, the baby became alive. It is interesting to note in this connexion that the Egyptian sisters Isis and Nepthys were both mothers of Osiris—"the progeny of the two cows, Isis and Nepthys." Two goddesses were also associated with the birth of the Sumerian god Tammuz. They were Ishtar and Belitsheri.[8] These legends may have some bearing on the idea of 'group-motherhood', as we shall see later. Seven mothers were also associated with the birth of Skanda-Viśākha-Kārttikeya.[9]

The Buddhist conception of Hārīti is also that of the protectress mother. According to the popular Buddhist legend, Hārīti, who was a Yakṣī, used to devour the babies of Rājagṛha. But this ogress was converted when she came in touch with the Buddha. Thereupon she began to be conceived as the protectress of children.[10] Sculptures representing the goddess and her consort are preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.[11] This very goddess, who is represented in the Gandhara sculpture, either as standing or seated, can be readily recognised from the children hanging around her.[12] A figure of this goddess about four feet high is found at Sahri-bahlol. Its right and left upper arms carry a bell and a trident respectively, while in the lower pair are held the figure of a small child and a *loṭā*-shaped bowl.[13] From Tayapur near Mathura comes a sculpture of Hārīti which represents her with an infant in her lap and four children between her feet. On the pedestal is carved a group of children at play. The villagers used to worship this image as Gāndhārī, the mother of the Kauravas.[14] The

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[6] Mackenzie, *TML*; picture facing, p. 54.
[7] *Mbh.*, ii, 17-18.
[8] Mackenzie, *CPHE*, 169.
[9] *Mbh.*, iii, 227.
[10] Takakusu, *RBR*, 37.
[11] Majumdar, *GSIM*, ii, 98ff.
[12] Hargreaves, *HSPM*, 44, 50; pl. vii; Marshall, *BAG*, 84, pl. cxii.
[13] *ASIAR*, 1911-12, 107; fig. 16: pl. xli.
[14] *Ibid*, 1909-10, 133.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MOTHERS : FORMS OF THE CULT

It appears from what we have seen above that the Earth Mothers came into being when people began to settle down in agricultural communities. The connexion between the growth of agriculture and the origin of the village communities may account for the emergence of the Earth and Corn Mothers. All over the world, the earth spirit is generally regarded as female and the presiding deities of agriculture are mainly goddesses, because the idea of fertility and reproduction is connected with woman. The fact that agriculture among primitive races was the business of women rather than of men probably meant that the village goddesses were at first worshipped by the women rather than by the men.

The Protectress of Children

The idea that the goddess of fertility must herself be fertile obviously led to the conception of the Mother Goddess as the protectress of children. As a source of human fecundity, she causes the conception of children in women, delivers them out of their mother's womb safely, and protects them from all dangers and evils.

The old Cretan Mother Goddess, whose different characteristics were absorbed by her Hellenic offshoots, was associated with fertility and childbirth.[1] The Greek Artemis was a protectress of children. In many places, maidens on their marriage used to dedicate to her the maiden chiton of girdle, and so she was called 'girdle-looser'. Sometimes after confinement married women dedicated their girdle and garment to her. The famous Artemis of Ephesus was thought of as a nurse and all-nourishing mother, as is indicated by the numerous breasts of her cult image.[2] The Roman form of this goddess was Diana who, like her Greek sister, absorbed the characteristics of two goddesses—Lady of the wild creatures and Protectress of children. At her sanctuaries, pregnant women used to offer candles and other articles to ensure easy delivery.[3] Juno, the Roman counterpart of the Greek Hera, was also originally a special goddess of childbirth.[4] The Great goddess Ishtar who was worshipped under many names was a protectress of children.[5] The Teutonic Freyja was also connected with fertility and childbirth, and in many respects she womb of the Mother Goddess, if not with the Mother Goddess herself. The *Kathāsaritsāgara*[75] identifies *kumbha* or *ghaṭa* explicitly with the uterus. "The equivalence may explain why the *Navarātra* 'nine night' fertility festival to all Mother Goddesses begins on the first of Āśvina by establishing a fertility-jar (*ghaṭasthāpanā*)."[76] The *kumbha* or jar as representation of Mother Goddess still survives in many festivals. In different parts of the country the rite of infusing by means of spells (*mantra*) the spirit of the goddess into an earthen jar is performed. A place within the temple is purified by plastering the surface with mud and cowdung. The jar is filled with water and covered with the shoots of the mango tree, and over it is placed an earthen saucer containg barley and rice, which is covered with a yellow cloth. The priest recites verses, and sprinkling water on the jar and its contents with a few blades of sacred *kuśa* grass, he invites the goddess to enter it. As a sign that she has occupied it, the outside of the jar is sprinkled with red powder. During the period occupied in the rite the priest practises abstinence, eating only roots and fruits. The service concludes with a fire sacrifice in which barley, sugar, butter and sesamum are burnt before the jar which holds the goddess.[77]

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[1] Glotz, AC, 245.

[2] Licht, *SLAG*, 194-95.

[3] Frazer, *GB* (ab), 5ff.

[4] Galey, *CM*, 204.

[5] *ERE*, vii, 428-34.

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[75] lxx. 112.
[76] Kosambi, *MR*, 73.
[77] *NINQ*, iv, 19f.

of children.[18] The South Indian Village Mothers are in many cases the protectresses of children. All these deities are essentially local in character, and have other functions to perform.

The City Goddesses

Since procreation and cultivation were closely linked up in primitive thought, a goddess of fertility and child-birth might also be the protectress deity of a primitive city which could not flourish without an extensive agricultural background. The city goddesses of the Semetic world were also protectresses of children. "There was at least one goddess as patron of each of the cities sharing with her lord the devotion of its worshippers. Instances are Nana, patroness of Urk; 'good lady' Bau Mother of Lagash; Ninlil of Nippur, 'mistress of the lower-world' and others."[19] The goddess Ishtar, who was the protectress of children, as we have recorded above, was also the presiding deity of the ancient Semitic cities. She was worshipped as Inanna in Erech, Nina in Ninevh, Annuit in Akkad and Zarpaint in Babylon. Mention must also be made in this connexion of city goddesses like Athena and Isis.[20] The aforesaid goddess Jarā of the *Mahābhārata* was the protectress deity of the city of Magadha. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* we come across the goddess Laṅkā who was the protectress of the city of the same name.[21] References to the city goddess (*nagaradevatā*) are found in many sources. They were not only protective deities but also maintainers of luck and prosperity (*nagaralakṣmī*) and popular stories about their departure from a city were meant to convey the idea of imminent danger or reversal of fortune. These goddesses are mentioned in literature and on coins. 'City goddess and Indian bull' is the most common type of Puṣkalāvatī coins. In the Purāṇas the goddess Durgā is sometimes portayed as the protectress of the forts.[22] This proves her association with city life.

In the subsequent history of the Mother Goddess cult, the city goddesses have played an important part. According to the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, the goddess is worshipped as Tripurasundarī at Tripura. Tripuramālinī or Tripuranāśinī is also associated with the *pīṭha* of Jālandhara. Cunningham refers to Tewar or Tripura, the capital of the Kalacuri kings of Cedi, the guardian deity of which was Tripuradevī.[23] The Tripurā-*piṭha*, however, is to be located at Radhakishorepur (old Rangamati or Udaypur) in the Tripura (Hill Tipperah) state. The temple of the goddess was built by king Dharmamāṇikya in Śaka 1423 (A.D. 1601). The goddess is probably the same as Tripuramālinī, the celebrated Tantric goddess mentioned in the *Kālikāpurāṇa*.[24] In Bengal, the goddess Kālī is generally worshipped as the protectress of a particular city or locality (cf. Kapileśvarī of Kapilmuni on the Kapotākṣa, Dhākeśvarī and Ramnā-Kālī of Dacca, Yaśoreśvarī of Iswaripur, ancient Yaśoharu, etc. After the partition of Bengal in 1947, such goddesses as Dhākeśvarī or Yaśoreśvarī have also become refugees, and now we have their temples in different parts of West Bengal). Of the famous city goddesses of Bihar, mention may be made of Gayeśvarī Devī of Gaya and Patanadevī or Patanīśvarī of Patna.[25] In Orissa we have Kicakeśvarī of Khiching, Samaleśvarī of Sambalpur, etc. Of the city goddesses of Rajasthan reference may be made to Ambā worshipped at Amber, Karṇimātā worshipped at Bikaner, Khimalmātā worshipped at Vasantgar and so on. In Mount Abu, Adhara Devī and Arbuda Mātā are worshipped as the presiding goddesses.[26] Cunningham refers to Jālpa Devī as the guardian deity of Jvālāmukhī in the Kangra district of Punjab.[27] According to the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* the goddess is worshipped at Jvālāmukhī as Ambikā. In the third quarter of the fourteenth century, Shams-i-Shiraj Afif mentions the goddess Jvālāmukhī whose temple was situated on the road to Nagarkot.[28] Abul Fazl also refers to this goddess.[29] According to the *Devipurāṇa*,[30] the presiding goddess of Ujjayini is Ujjayinī Devī. Cunningham also refers to Ujjayinī Devī or Jvālā Devī as the tutelary deity of the place.[31] These goddesses were originally local, but later identified with the Supreme Being of the Śāktas. The presiding deities of the *pīṭhas* were originally local goddesses, and the story of Satī's death, the falling of her limbs in different *pīṭhas*, etc., were obviously invented to bring all these different goddesses in relation to the Śākta Devī. The *Kūrmapurāṇa*[32] mentions more than one thousand names of the Mother Goddess. In some of the Purāṇas it is stated that the goddess is worshipped in 108 holy places under different names.[33] Many of the place-names mentioned therein, are evidently mythical. A realistic list is, however, given in the *Devīpurāṇa*.[34]

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[18] Crooke. *TCNWPO*, ii, 177ff.

[19] *ERE*, v. 827.

[20] Farnell, *GB*, 82ff; Frazer, *AAO*, 128ff; Jastrow, *RBA*, 140ff; King, *BRM*, 10ff; etc.

[21] v. 3. 21-51.

[22] *Devīpurāṇa*, lxxxiii, 62-63; *Devībhāgavata*, iii, 24. 5-6; *Harivaṃśa*, cxx, 35.

[23] *R.*, ix, 54, 58.

The Goddesses of Disease

The protectress of children cannot forsake them even in their youth and old age. She has to protect them from diseases and other troubles. That is why all the world over the Village Mothers have often been conspicuously associated with diseases.

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[24] lxiii. 51-52.

[25] Buchanan in Martin's *EI*, i, 191.

[26] Tod, *AAR*, i, 96ff.

[27] *R*, v, 172.

[28] Elliot. *HI*, iii, 318.

[29] Jerrett, *AA*, ii, 317f.

[30] xxxvii. 3-9.

[31] *R*, i, 253.

[32] i. 12.

[33] *Matsya*, xiii ; *Devī Bh.*, vii. 30 ; *Skanda*, Revā, xcviii ; *Padma*, Sr. xvii.

[34] xxxvii-xxxix.

The smallpox goddess is a form of Divine Mother universally adored under different names throughout India. From the most backward tribes and castes to the educated classes, the Smallpox-goddess is much dreaded. This goddess may either avert smallpox, or cause it. In Northern India, she is called Śītalā Devī, one of the seven sisters who control pustular diseases. In Bihar, Kankar Mātā is most dreaded, but happily her attacks are rare. Phulmātā and Pansahi-mātā attack children at the age of seven, Baḍimātā those between seven and fifteen, Gulsaila-mātā those of any age. This goddess is not only dreaded by the Hindus, but by the Muslims as well. The Muslim Atari tribes of Madhya Pradesh worship her as Mātā.[35] She is also known by Mātā Masāni and other names. She is represented by a rude piece of stone placed on a platform under a *baroda* tree in Patiala and other parts of the Punjab.[36] In the South East Punjab, Śītalā is attended by Sedhulāl, her servant, who is worshipped before her as an intercessor.[37]

In Mysore, Sukhajamma is the goddess of measles and pox.[38] One of the deities worshipped in almost every village of the Tamil country is Mariamma or Mari, the goddess of smallpox.[39] In Bellary town, the pox goddess is Sunkalamma.[40] Ehrenfels refers to a number of matriarchal tribes among whom the pox goddess is a very important deity.[41] Sometimes she is worshipped by women alone.[42]

The Plague Mother is worshipped at Gaya as Bombāi Māi.[43] In South India, she is worshipped as Plague-amma, and sometimes in the Kannada Districts as Uramma.[44] Many Caṇḍīs are worshipped in Bengal, such as Olāi, Dhelāi, Kalāi, Mehāi, Kulāi, Khaḍa, Vasana, etc. Before their identification with the Great Caṇḍī of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* they were simple local goddesses worshipped in connexion with disease and other troubles. Olāi Caṇḍī, the Cholera Mother is sometimes represented as wearing a gown and mounted on a horse but usually her emblem is an earthen pot placed under a *nim* tree. Her priest is generally drawn from the lower castes, and her favourite offering is a goat. She is also venerated as Didi Ṭhākrun, both by Hindus and Muslims in the Burdwan district. Mārī or Mārī Bhavānī is also worshipped as the Cholera Mother in U.P. and the Punjab.[45] Throughout Central India, the Cholera Mother is worshipped as Moti-Mātā in the form of a stone before which goats are sacrificed and copper coins and flowers are offered.[46] In the time of

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[35] Russel and Hiralal, *TCCPI*, ii, 44.

[36] *JASB*, lxv, 33.

[37] *IA*, viii, 211.

[38] Whitehead, *VGSI*, 29.

[39] *Ibid.*, 31-32.

[40] *Ibid.*, 74.

[41] *MRI*, 79-80.

[42] *JAnSB*, xii, 829.

[43] O'Malley, *CR*, *BBOS* (1911), i, 228.

[44] Whitehead, *VGSI*, 21, 71.

[45] *NINQ*, iii, 107.

[46] Crooke, *RFNI*, 322.

Cholera, the Bagia priests propitiate the village Mother Khermātā.[47] Among the Paltia Bhils of Central India, when Cholera becomes an epidemic, the Badwa exhorcists become possessed by the Village Mother. A jar filled with wine is put on a small wooden toy cart and dragged to the border of the village, the Badwas dancing under the inspiration of the goddess. At the border the cart is taken over by men from the next village, and so it passes on.[48] When Cholera breaks out, the Dhodias of Bombay carry on image of their goddess in a small cart and, having worshipped the image, they send it to the next village.[49] When Cholera appears in the region of Bundi, the goddess Mārī, decorated in funeral emblems, painted black and drawn by black oxen, is transported across the Chambal, with the commands of the priest that she should never again set foot in the vilage.[50]

In many of the Telugu villages the goddess Peddamma is worshipped in connexion with epidemics. The goddess Pallalamma of Gudivada near Masulipatam also serves the same purpose. At Cocanada the goddess Nukalamma is usually worshipped, but when an epidemic of Cholera breaks out, another goddess, called Maridiamma, is installed in the place of Nukalamma. In Canarese area two groups, each consisting of seven divinities, are worshipped in connexion with various diseases. The first group consists of Annamma, Caṇḍeśvaramma, Mayesvaramma, Maramma, Kokkalamma, Udalamma and Sukhajamma, while the second of Bisal-mari, Goonal-mari, Kel-mari, Yeerangere-mari, Hiridevathi Cammandamma and Uttanahaliamma. In the Tanjore District, Mariamman, Angalamman and Kaliamman are all worshipped with typical rites. In the district of Trichinopoly, Kalumaiamman is the Cholera-mother to whom animal sacrifices are made.[51]

Local Legends of Mariamma

Various legends centre round the origin of the South Indian pox goddess Mariamma. One of the many stories current about her is that she was the wife of a sage called Piruhu. One day, during the absence of the sage, three gods visited her to see whether she was as beautiful and virtuous as reported. Having understood their bad intentions, the sage's wife, whose name was Nāgavalī, transformed them into little children. The gods took offence and cursed her, so that her beauty faded away, and her face became dotted with marks like those of smallpox. According to a second story, Mariamma was the wife of the Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar and she cured her own smallpox by fanning herself with Margosa leaves. When she recovered, the people worshipped her as the goddess of smallpox, and hung up Margosa leaves over their doors to keep the smallpox away.

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[47] Russel and Hiralal, *TCCPI*, ii, 87.

[48] Luard, *ESCI*, 49.

[49] Enthoven, *TCB*, i, 334f.

[50] Tod, *AAR*, iii, 1733ff.

[51] Whitehead, *VGSI*, 48ff.

The third story is quite an interesting one. The Puranic Reṇukā-Paraśurāma legend is linked up with the origin of Mariamma. Mariamma is identified with Reṇukā, the mother of Parśurāma. Paraśurāma's father, who was suspicious about the chastity of his wife, ordered him to cut off the head of his mother. While doing so he also cut off the head of a Pariah woman who, out of sympathy, had taken the dead woman, in her arms. Paraśurāma's father promised him a reward in return for his obedience: so Paraśurāma asked that his mother be restored to life. The father granted the request and giving him some water in a vessel and a cane told him to put his mother's head on her body, and to tap her with the cane and sprinkle water on her. In his eagerness Paraśurāma put his mother's head on the body of the Pariah woman and vice-versa, and restored them both to life. The woman with the Brāhmaṇa head and Pariah body was afterwards worshipped as Mariamma, and the woman with the Pariah head as the goddess Yellamma.

Referring to this story, Whitehead observes: "The story.. probably describes the fusion of the Aryan and Dravidian cults in the days when the Aryans first found their way into South India. A Pariah body with a Brāhmaṇa head is an apt description of the cult of Śiva; while a Pariah head with a Brāhmaṇa body might well describe some of the cults of the ancient Dravidian deities, modified by Brāhmaṇa ideas and influences."[52]

The Goddess and the Animal World

"She continually appears to be an escort of the beasts for she is the mistress of the wild animals, snakes, birds and fishes", writes Gustave Glotz while describing the attributes of the Aegean Mother Goddess.[53] Sir James Frazer while dealing with the characteristics of the goddess Diana, the Roman form of the Greek Artemis, points out her association with the animals.[54]

In the *Harivaṃśa*, it is said that the Mother Goddess living in the Vindhyas has the following of fowls, goats, rams, lions and tigers.[55] She is *Siṃhavāhinī*, that is, her vehicle is lion. Ma, the great goddess of Cappadocia, who is the consort of Teshub, stands on a lion or a panther like the Cretan Rhea or the Phrygian Cybele.[56]

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[52] *VGSI*, 117.

[53] *AC*, 245.

[54] *GB* (ab), 5ff.

[55] *Viṣṇu*, iii. 8.

[56] Raychaudhuri in *DRBV*, 301ff.

Atargatis, the great Syrian goddess of Hierapolis-Bambyce, was portrayed sitting on the lion. The goddess Rhea is frequently represented with two lions standing on her knees.[57] Like Śiva, the consort of the Cappadocian Mother Goddess had for his vehicle a bull. "The Father God at Boghaz-Keui, meeting the Mother Goddess on her lioness, is attended by an animal which according to the usual interpretation is a bull ; and that bull itself was worshipped, apparently as an emblem of fertility, at Euyuk near Boghaz-Keui."[58] At Tarsus and Boghaz-Keui, as at Hierapolis-Bambyce, the Father God and the Mother Goddess would seem to have had as their sacred animals or emblems the bull and the lion respectively.

The people of Berar worship the Village Mother in the form of Vaghāi Devī, the tiger-goddess.[59] At the north-east corner of the village Kurkihar, near Gaya, there is a temple dedicated to Vāgheśvarī Devī ; but the image inside is that of the eight-armed Durgā. The statue pointed out to Cunningham as that of Vāgheśvarī was a four-armed female seated on a lion with a child on her lap.[60] In Mysore villages the goddess Huliamma is worshipped in the form of a tigress.[61] In the *Śivapurāṇa*, we find a story how a tiger became a pet of the Devī by practising severe austerities.[62] Among other animal forms of the Mother Goddess, we find that she is worshipped in the form of an elephant by the Khands.[63] In a village called Padaraona, 12 miles to the west of the river Gandak, is a roofless temple dedicated to Hāthi Bhawanī, the elephant goddess ; she is propitiated with crude votive figures of elephants in baked clay. But the figure inside the temple is male.[64] Bhainsāsuri, the deified buffalo, has become a form of the goddess Kālī in popular belief.[65] The Rajputs consider the wild pig as representing the goddess Gaurī.[66] The symbolism of the pig has already been dealt with. In the *Devīmāhatmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, as well as in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī* of Kalhaṇa, we come across the goddess Bhrāmarī, the mistress of the bees and the wasps. The bee was the symbol of Inanna or Nanaia, the great goddess of Western Asia, who was conceived of as the mother of Attis[67] and identified with Ishtar, Astarte, Artemis, Anaitis and Aphrodite.[68]

In Bundelkhand, certain snakes, known as Bhirani, said to mean 'earth-dwellers', are recognised as a form of the Mother Goddess.[69] In Bengal, Manasā is worshipped as the goddess presiding over the snakes.[70] She is sometimes described as Jagadgaurī as well as Padmāvatī. Her other names are Viṣahari and Bhujaṅgajananī Kamalā. Her plant *Euphorbia Neriifolia* is planted in the courtyard during the Daśahārā festival and worshipped on the occasion of the *Nāga Pañcamī*.[71] The cult of the snakes are also very popular in the lower Himalayas and is found there in the significant company of Niana Devī.[72] It was practised all over the ancient world in association with the cult of the Mother Goddess. Goddesses like Artemis, Ashtart, Isis, Gaia, Demeter and others had also snakes as their symbols.[73]

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[57] Frazer, *AAO*, 105-6.

[58] *Ibid.*, 131.

[59] Lyall, *GB*, 191f.

[60] Cunningham, *R*, i, 15.

[61] Whitehead, *VGSI*, 29.

[62] *Vayaviya*, xxii-xxiii.

[63] Thurston, *EN*, ii, 102,238.

[64] Cunningham, *R*, i, 75.

[65] *Ibid.*, xvii, 141.

[66] Tod, *AAR*, i, 80f ; ii, 661 ; iii, 1381.

[67] Frazer, *AAO*, 217.

[68] Hutton, *CI*, 152.

[69] Luard, *ESCI*, i, 175.

[70] For this goddess see *Devi Bh.*, ix, 48.

The Mother Goddess is worshipped in many places as the protectress of animals. In Madhya Pradesh, the Garia shepards worship Diśāi Devī as the protectress of sheep-pen.[74] Bharcaṇḍī is worshipped by the Tharus of Tarai as the cattle protectress.[75] Among the Parayans, Bhagavatī is the goddess whose benevolence is responsible for the preservation of the vigour and health of the bulls.[76] Such examples can be multiplied.

In the *Caṇḍīmaṅgala*, a Bengali poetical work of the late medieval period, the goddess is conceived of as the protectress of all wild animals. The hero of the story, Kālaketu, was oppressing the animals, who complained to the goddess, saying that they were helpless before Kālaketu and requested her to save them. The goddess thereupon adopted the form of an iguana (*godhā*). Kālaketu, having seen it on the way, brought it to his own hut where, in the absence of Kālaketu, the goddess left her iguana form and assumed the shape of a beautiful damsel.[77]

The Devī's association with the iguana is significant. In the *Kalikāpurāṇa* as well as in the *Viśvasāra Tantra* the sacrifice of an iguana is brought in connexion with the cult of the Mother Goddess.[78] In Jain iconography, we have references to an iguana as the symbol of Gaurī.[79] In the *Pratimālakṣaṇa* quoted in Gopinath Rao's *Hindu Iconography* we come across such passages as *godhāsanā bhaved gaurī lilayā haṃsavāhanā*, etc. It is also to be noted that some primitive tribes of Madhya Pradesh worship the iguana as their totemic symbol.[80]

All over India the cow is regarded as a form of the Mother Goddess. This identification is not confined to India alone. In the Late Predynastic Egypt her Hathor or Cow-form was worshipped.[81] The goddess Neith was also conceived of as a cow[82] while Isis was simply a cow-goddess.[83] At Al'ubaid on the Euphrates the cow-goddess, later known as Nin-Khursag, was the mother of all beings.[84] Beef-eating is taboo to all Hindus. In pastoral societies, cattle are generally valued for milk and wealth, not for meat, and therefore the flesh of the domestic animals, especially of the cow, is commonly tabooed.[85] The taboo on food has thus an economic significance.[86] The Vedic Aryans were Higher Pastorals and cattle were their chief source of wealth. This alone explains the taboo of beef-eating. But it remains to be seen how the Mother Goddess, who has a non-Vedic agricultural foundation, has become identified with the cow. Did the Vedic Aryans impose the taboo of beef-eating upon the native inhabitants for their economic conquest over the latter ? Did they exploit the non-Vedic Mother Goddess for the said purpose and was it the reason for her identification with their chief source of wealth ?

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[71] Sen, *HBLL*, 252ff.

[72] Hutton, *CI*, 152n.

[73] *ERE*, xi, 399f.

[74] Russell, *TCCPI*, iii, 12, 30, 37.

[75] Atkinson, *HD*, i, 828f.

[76] Iyer, *MTC*, i, 84.

[77] Bhattacharyya, *MG*, 146-62.

[78] *Ibid*., intro.

[79] Bhattacharyya, *JI*, 172.

[80] Russel, *TCCPI*, i, 365 ; iii, 141.

[81] Hornblower, in *JEA*, xv (1929), 39

[82] Levy, *GH*, 116.

[83] Frazer, *AAO*, 106, 300, 319.

[84] Gadd in *UE*, i, 142ff.

[85] Robertson Smith, *RS*, 406.

[86] Thomson, *AA*, 21.

The Blood-thirsty Goddesses

Bāṇabhaṭṭa in his *Kādambarī*[87] has mentioned the goddess of the Śabaras who was worshipped with human sacrifices. We come across her again in his *Harṣacarita*.[88] The *Gauḍavaha* of Vākpati identifies Vindhyavāsinī with Kālī or Pārvatī, associates her with the Kols and Śabaras and refers to human sacrifices offered to her.[89] In Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* we have reference to the blood thirsty goddess Bhagavatī or Kātyāyanī of Kusumapura. In the *Mālatīmādhava* we come across the idea of human sacrifice before the goddess. According to a story found in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*,[90] Jīmūtavāhana was captured by robbers who led him to a temple of Durgā in a Śabara village to sacrifice him to the goddess. Similar reference to a human sacrifice to the goddess called Caṇḍikā is found in another story.[91]

Gait has given an interesting account of the ceremonies conducted at the opening of the restored temple of Kāmākhyā in Assam. "When the new temple of Kāmākhyā was opened, the occasion was celebrated by the immolation of no less than a hundred and forty men, whose heads were offered to the goddess on salvers made of copper. According to the *Haft Iqlim*, there was in Kāmarūpa a class of persons called *Bhogis* who were voluntary victims. From the time when they announced that the goddess had called them, they were treated as privileged persons ; they were allowed to do whatever they liked, and every woman was at their command ; but when the annual festival came round, they were killed."[92] The following note on the religious life of the Chutiyas of Assam is significant : "The religion of the Chutiyas was a curious one. They worshipped various forms of Kālī with the aid not of the Brāhmaṇas but of their tribal priests or Deoris. The favourite form in which they worshipped this deity was that of Kesai Khati 'the eater of raw flesh', to whom human sacrifices were offered. After their subjugation by the Ahoms, the Deoris were permitted to continue their ghastly rites ; but they were usually given, for the purpose, criminals who had been sentenced to capital punishment. If none were available, victims were taken from a particular clan, which in return was accorded certain privileges. The person selected was fed sumptuously, until he was plump to suit the supposed taste of the goddess, and he was then decapitated at the copper temple at Sadia, or at some other shrine of the tribe. Human sacrifices were also formerly offered by the Tipperas, Kacharis, Koches, Jaintias and other Assam tribes."[93] According to the popular tradition of Rajasthan, king Lāṅgā of Mewar sacrificed his nine sons before the goddess Cāmuṇḍā, but the unappeased hunger of the goddess at last needed the head of the old king himself.[94]

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[87] Pūrvabhāga / Kāthāmukha.

[88] viii.

[89] 285-347.

[90] Tawney, *OS*, ii, ch. 22.

[91] *Ibid.*, i, ch. 10.

[92] *HA*, 56.

In Bengal, the goddess Kālī is generally worshipped with animal sacrifices. Human sacrifices were originally offered to the Dākātiyā Kālīs (the Kālī of the Robbers). Shrines of these Dākātiyā Kālīs are still found at Bijpur near Kanchrapara in the 24 Parganas, at Bangaon on the Ichamati, at Baghati near Tribeni in the Hooghly district and at many places. In the villages of Eastern Bengal there are places called *kholā* (cf. *thāna* of West Bengal) sacred to the goddess Jayadurgā who is propitiated with animal sacrifice. Jayadurgā of Kotalipara in the Faridpur district is a popular deity of Eastern Bengal.[95] At Dhamrai near Dacca on the river Bamsi the goddess Vanadurgā is worshipped with pig-sacrifice. At Rasapur in the Howrah district, as well as in some villages of the Hooghly district, the goddess Vindhyavāsinī is worshipped with buffalo sacrifice.

The villagers of Orissa worship an animistic goddess of their own, Pañca-Khaṇḍā, with offerings of he-goats, fowls and rice commanded by the performers of the sacrifice. The headman officiates at all acts of public worship.[96] The village deities are, as a rule feminine, and are known by the title of Grāmadevati or Ṭhākurāṇī. Each village has one of its own, and her status is officially recognised.[97] She is generally worshipped under the shade of a tree.[98] The tutelary deity of the Chilka lake is Kālijai who is said to have been an incarnation of Kālī.[99] To the goddess Bhaṭṭakārikā Berembā human sacrifices were formerly offered.[100] The Ṭhākurāṇī-cult was once prevalent among the Aruvas of Berhampur in Ganjam district.[101] The Bavuris[102] and Bhondaris[103] of the same district have also Ṭhākurāṇī cults. The Ṭhākurāṇīs of the Bosantiyas[104] are known by such names as Kotaru or Caṇḍī, of the Dandasis[105] as Sankaithuni Kulladankuni, Kombesari, Kalimukhi, etc., of the Haddis[106] as Kalumukhi, Sathabavuni, Baidaro, etc., and so on. The Ṭhākurāṇīs of the Bhuniyas, Bendkars or Sabaras of Keonjhar[107] are blood-thirsty, once worshipped even with human sacrifices. Of these Ṭhākurāṇīs, Bensuri is especially important.[108]

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[93] *Ibid.*, 42.

[94] Mitra, *IA*, 61.

[95] According to the *Dharmamaṅgalas* Jayadurgā is worshipped at Phulā, Dikani and Tārāmapura, A goddess of the same name is the presiding deity of the Vaidyanātha-pīṭha.

[96] Risley, *TCB*, ii, 267 ff.

[97] Gait, *CI*, 1901, Bengal (1), 260 n.

[98] *JASB*, lxii, 81

[99] *JAnSB*, l, 190.

[100] *Ibid.*, xv, 76.

[101] Thurston, *CTSI*, i, 60.

[102] *Ibid.*, 180.

[103] *Ibid.*, 230.

[104] *Ibid.*, 264.

[105] *Ibid.*, ii, 108.

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] Dalton, *DEB*, 147-49.

[108] Russell, *TCCPI*, iv, 500 ff; Risley, *TCB*, ii, 241 ff.

In different parts of South India, the goddess Durgā was worshipped with blood-sacrifice. Several panels of Durgā of the Pallava period portray devotee offering his own head by cutting it off piece by piece. The *Manimekalāi* speaks of a Durgā temple in which there was a sacrificial altar surrounded by posts with truncated heads dangling from it.[109] According to the popular tradition the goddess Kāmākṣī of Kāñchī was originally blood-thirsty, but it was Śaṅkarācārya who propitiated her, and since then her character was changed. The South Indian Village Mothers are almost universally worshipped with animal sacrifices.[110]

In Bengal, Kālī is worshipped as a protectress deity (Rakṣākālī) generally on the crossroads. In Śūdraka's *Mṛcchakaṭika* we have reference to Cārudatta's sacrifice to the Mothers at the crossroads. Major crossroads were most favoured for meritorious public works. In a *Jātaka* story[111] we find that king Pasenadi of Kosala was terrified by sixteen ominous dreams in a single night, and the Brahmins advised him to make extensive blood-sacrifices at every crossways. After an extensive enquiry Kosambi came to the conclusion that the crossways were the original sites for the Mother Goddess cults. From the stone age these were places where the Mothers were normally worshipped by primitive peoples whose nomad tracts met at the junction. Some of these tracts later developed into trade-routes. Traders setting out on their travels made animal sacrifices to some deity and vowed to make more if the journeys were profitable. Cārudatta, who was the son of a Sārthavāha and resident of a merchant's quarter must have known the travelling merchant's custom to salute and, if possible, sacrifice to the Mother Goddesses encountered during a voyage.[112]

The Tribal Divinities

Many tribes of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have now been hinduised and have lost their original tribal character. They now belong to the lower strata of Hindu society. The Aherias of Uttar Pradesh, who formerly lived on hunting, have a cult of Mother Goddess whom they call simply Devī.[113] The Ahirs, who are now agricultural and pastoral castes, worship Śiva and Devī. They are now scattered in different parts of India. In Mirzapur, their goddess is Vindhyavāsinī. The Ahirs of Bengal are mainly Vaiṣṇavite. Among the Ahirs of the Deccan, the Mother Goddess is more or less popular. Among the Oraons, Sarna Burhī, 'the old woman of the grove' is worshipped ; she corresponds to the Jahir Era and Desauli of the Mundas. She is also called Jhakra-Burhī. They worship Mother Earth as wife of the god Dharma. The evil spirits called *nad* are females in many of the cases. They also worship Caṇḍa or Caṇḍī who is a goddess of hunting.[114] Among the Bhuiyas of Singhbhum and Lohardaga, Ṭhākurāṇī Māi, 'the blood thirsty goddess' has now become a form of Durgā or Kālī.[115] Among the Birhors, Mahāmāyā is supposed to be the daughter of the Hindu Devī. A trident painted red is also worshipped by them as the monkey-god Hanumān who is believed to be an officer of the goddess.[116] Among the Bediyas the goddess is worshipped under such names as Devī, Kālī, Jvālāmukhī, etc.[117] Lohāsur Devī is worshipped especially by the Agarias, Agars or Agaris with animal sacrifice offered by the Bagia priests. The goddess presides over the melting furnace.[118] Among the Kharwars of Palamau the goddess Canda is worshipped and among those of other parts of Bihar and U.P. the special goddesses are Dharti (Earth Mother), Purgahaili or Daknai, Jvālāmukhī and Aṅgārmatī (war-goddess).[119] The Kharwars of Chotanagpur have the cult of the goddess Muchak Rāṇī.[120] The Birhors of Hazaribagh worship Banhi, goddess of the jungles, Lugu, protectress of earth, Buriā-māi, Dudhā māi, etc. A rod of wood is symbol of their goddess Mahāmāyā.[121] Among the Śavaras, Saoras or Sauras of Bihar and U.P., the pox-goddess Śītalā-māi is popular. Bansuri or Ṭhākurāṇi is also worshipped by some of their groups.[122] Among the Mundas, cults of the village mothers are predominant. They are worshipped under different names.[123] The Musahars, originally hunting peoples, worship Kālī and also Banaspati. The latter is the forest-mother who is married to Gansam or Bansgopāl. The Kurs of Chotanagpur worship Nāga Bhuian, the female earth-serpent.[125] The Kalwars of Bihar and U.P. worship Hinduised goddesses like Kālī, Durgā, Ratma, etc.[126] Among the Majhwars, Deoharin occupies the village shrine. She is identified with the Hindu Devī and her worship is attended by women. Sacrifices of fowls and goats are offered to her. The majhwars also worship Nagin, the snake-goddess.[127] Among the Mals, Mal Paharias etc, who are agricultural peoples having a wide distribution in different parts of the country, such goddesses as Manasā and others are worshipped. The goddess

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[109] Menon in *SAKCV*, 234-39.

[110] Whitehead, *VGSI*, 23 ff.

[111] No. 77.

[112] *MR*, 82-109.

[113] Crooke, *TCNWPO*, i, 45 ff ; *PRFLNI*, ii, 57.

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114. Dalton, *DEB*, 257 ff.
115. *Ibid.*, 147, 149.
116. *Ibid.*, 220.
117. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, i, 242 ff.
118. Dalton, *DEB*, 196, 322 ff; Forbes in *NINQ*, iv, 43; Crooke, *TCNWPO*, i, I ff; cf. *BG*, xv (1), 360; *JASB*, lvii (1) 8.
119. Dalton, *DEB*, 130.
120. *NINQ*, iii, 23 ff.
121. Dalton, *DEB*, 220.
122. Risley, *TCB*, ii, 241 ff; Crooke, *TCNWPO*, iv, 320 ff.
123. *IGI*, xviii, 38 f; xxi, 203 f; Risley, *TCB*, ii, 101 ff.
124. Risley, *TCB*, ii, 116; Crooke, *TCNWPO*, iv, 12 ff, 36 f.
125. Dalton, *DEB*. 231.
126. Risley, *TCB*, i, 386; Crooke, *TCNWPO*, ii, 111 ff.
127. Crooke, *TCNWPO*, iii, 413 ff.

Siṃhavāhinī is popular among them. The Mal Paharias worship Dharti-mātā, the earth-mother, and her sister Garami.[128] Many of the tribes and castes of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have their branches in other states of India. As for example, the Aherias of U.P. have also their settlements in the Punjab. The Santals of Bihar have also their settlements in different parts of Bengal and it is interesting to note that one of their goddesses, Gusain Era, has been adopted by some sections of the Bagdi caste.[129]

In the *Kubjikātantra*[130] the Vindhyan region is referred to as one of the *Siddhapīṭhas*. This region is undoubtedly associated with the celebrated non-Vedic goddess Vindhyavāsinī whose temple stands near modern Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh. Tradition says that near Vindhyācala the head of the Vindhya lies prostrate in worship of this goddess, while his feet are at Chunar and Rajmahal. A different version of the story places one foot at Gayā. In the *Mahābhārata*,[131] the Vindhyan region is said to have been the permanent abode of the Mother Goddess. The *Harivaṃśa*[132] also refers to the Mother Goddess as residing in the Vindhyas and worshipped by such non-Vedic tribes as the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas. In the Purāṇas, Vindhyavāsinī is identified with Kauśikī, Kātyāyanī and Nandā.[133] In the *Matsyapurāṇa*,[134] Kālī in Kalyanjar mountain, Caṇḍikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavāsinī in the Vindhya mountain are mentioned as the different manifestations of the Devī. Her special attraction for wine and meat has also been referred to in the Purāṇas.[135]

The Śabaras, as we have seen above, are scattered over different parts of India. Various forms of Mother Goddesses are worshipped by them. The Śabaras of Madhya Pradesh worship her under the name Bhavāni.[136] The Sansis or Sansiyas inhabiting the North Western regions of the Vindhyan range are more or less hinduised and they worship the Mother Goddess under the names Kālī, Jvālāmukhī and others.[137] The cult of the Ramoshis of the South Western regions is devoted mainly to female spirits or mothers associated with the demon leader Vetāla.[138] The Mahars worship Ai Bhavānī whose image they keep in their houses.[139] Small Pox goddess is worshipped by them under the name Devī or Mātā Devī.[140] Among the Gonds she is also worshipped under the same name, and in her more aweful form she is Danteśvarī.[141] The Chamar castes scattered over the regions to the north of the Vindhyas are worshippers especially of Dharti Mātā, the Earth Mother.[142] The Gowri tribes of Madhya Pradesh worship a mythological ancestress[143] and this is true of other matriarchal castes like the

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[128] Risley, *TCB*, ii, 45 ff ; Dalton, *DEB*, 138 ff ; 263 ff.

[129] Lyall, *AS*, i, 39 ff ; Risley, *TCB*, i, 41-42

[130] Quoted in *Prāṇatoṣanī*, 234.

[131] iv. 6.

[132] ii. 3.6-8.

[133] *Vāmana*, liv, 23-8 ; *Devi M.*, xi, 1-2, 42.

[134] xiii. 32, 39, 43.

[135] *Viṣṇu*, v. 2.84 ; cf. *Harivaṃśa*, ii, 22.55-56.

[136] Russell, *TCCPI*, iv, 506 ff.

[137] *Ibid.*, 485 ff.

[138] *Ibid.*, 472 ff.

[139] *BG*, xii, 118 ff ; xvii, 172 ff.

[140] Russell, *CPES*, 90 ff.

[141] Grant, *GCP*, 181, 372.

[142] Crooke, *TCNWPO*, ii, 178 ff.

[143] Russell, *TCCPI*, iii. 161.

Bhunjias, Dumals, Kamars, Kawars, Khangars, etc.[144] The Bhils who are also scattered in the Vindhyan region and its adjoining areas worship Mātā, a Mother Goddess represented by symbols like wooden posts, earthen horses, winnowing fans, etc., rather than by images. She is also worshipped under such names as Śītalā, Pārvatī, Vajar, Mātā, etc.[145]

Of the popular goddesses of Rajasthan, reference may be made to Mama Devī, mother of the gods, Annapūrṇā, Śākambharī, Mātā Jananī and Āśāpūrṇā.[146] Various forms of the Mother Goddess are worshipped in Punjab, North Gujarat and Rajasthan.[147] The Bechraji shrine of Baroda deserves special mention. Here a married woman of the Charan or herald caste has been deified as an incarnation of the Mātā or Divine Mother and is worshipped in the form of a *yoni*.[148] In Kathiawar, each Rajput clan has a patron mother. Tuturia mother is served by women in many places of Western India.[149] Bahucharaji, the 'looking-glass' goddess has a shrine at Anjar in Kutch.[150] In Gujarat region we come across a lot of shrines dedicated to the local mothers. The Bhils of Rajasthan have the cult of a divine ancestress.[151] The Corn-mother Gaurī is associated with wild pig by many a Rajput tribe.[152]

In Punjab we find unmarried girls recognised as the representatives of the Devī, Twice a year offerings are made to them, as representatives of the goddess. The hill-peoples are worshippers of Śakti and the tops of hills are sacred to the goddess. The Gujars of Punjab, North Gujarat and Western Rajasthan worship Śītalā and Bhavānī,[153] while the Sansis or Sansiyas who have also their settlements in Punjab worship such Hindu goddesses as Devī or Kālī.[154] Kālī or Kālī Bhavānī is also an object of worship among the Bawariyas of Punjab.[155] The Mother Goddess is worshipped simply under the name Devī among the Aherias of the same region.[156]

Bishop Whitehead after an extensive enquiry into the names, characteristics and functions of the village deities of South India has summed up the matter as follows : (I) They symbolize the village life and are related, not to the great world-forces, but to such simple matters as cholera, small-pox, cattle-disease, etc. (II) The village deities, with very few exceptions, are females. This naturally rises from the fact that among primitive peoples, the cultivation of the fields was largely left to the women and that the idea of fertility is naturally connected with the female. (III) They are almost universally worshipped with animal sacrifices. (IV) The priests are not Brāhmaṇas, but are drawn from all other castes. (V) The names of the village deities are legion, some of them having an obvious meaning and many quite unintelligible to the people themselves. They differ almost in every district and often the deities worshipped in one village are quite unknown in other villages five or six miles off. (VI) The characters of the goddesses vary considerably. The villagers do not regard them as evil spirits, but neither do they regard them as unmixed benefactors. (VII) The functions of the different goddesses are not at all very clearly marked.[157]

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[144] *Ibid.*, 324, 428, 534 ; iii, 89, 328, 391, 440.

[145] Malcom, *MCI*, ii, 181 ; Hendley in *JRASB*, xliv, 347 ff.

[146] Tod, *AAR*, i, 435, 544, 553.

[147] Crooke, *TCNWPO*, ii, 439 ff.

[148] *BG*, vii, 409 ff.

[149] *BG*, xi, 383 ; Cunningham, *R*, xiii, 147.

[150] *BG*, v, 212.

[151] Forbes, *RM*, 78 ff,

[152] Tod, *AAR*, i, 80f ; ii, 661 ; iii, 1381.

[153] Crooke, *TCNWPO*, ii, 439ff.

[154] Ibbetson, *OPE*, 311.

[155] Crooke, *PRFLNI*, i, 211f.

[156] *Ibid.*, ii, 57.

So far as the shrines, symbols, ministrants and festivals relating to the Village Mothers are concerned, the following may be stated : (I) Some of the shrines, especially in the Tamil country, are fairly large buildings, but the majority of the shrines are mean little brick buildings of various shapes and sizes. In many villages, the shrine is simply a rough stone platform under a tree, and in many of the Telugu villages there is no permanent shrine at all. (II) In some villages there is no permanent image or symbol, a clay figure of the goddess is made for each festival. In other villages the deity is represented simply by a stone pillar. Very often the goddess is represented in processions by a brass pot filled with water. (III) One of the most striking features of the worship of Village Mothers is the absence of anything like a priestly caste in connexion with it. In some cases there a Brahmin may be in charge of a shrine, but he never takes any part in the animal sacrifices. In the Telugu country the potters and the washermen often officiate as priests. (IV) There is no act of uniformity and no ecclesiastical calendar regulating the festivals or forms of worship of the village deities. In many places there is a fixed annual festival which generally takes place after the harvest. In most places, however, there is no regular annual festival. Again, there is no uniformity as to the duration of a festival.[158]

Among the tribes of Assam the cult of the Mother Goddess in not very developed. The reason is rather uncertain. A rudimentary form of the earth cult is found among some Assamese tribes. The earth is not female in all the cases. Among the Abor or Abor Miri living on the banks of the Dihang river, we have the cult of Kilu Deli, the male and female earth spirit.[159] The Ahoms likewise have Lengbin and Lengdin, god and goddess of the earth.[160] The hill tribes of northern frontier, like the Khamti, Singpho Mishmi, and many of the Abor group like the Padam, Dophla and others have no specialised Mother Goddess cult. Among the Mikirs, the gods are borrowed mainly from the Khasis, and their pantheon is patriarchal. But they have priestesses or shamanesses known as *lodest*. The Lushais also have priestesses of this sort. Among the Manipuris, "the Maibees are priestesses of an order said to have been instituted many hundreds of years ago by one of the royal princesses. Any woman who chooses to declare herself inspired, . may enter upon her novitiate as a priestess, and on her admission may practice on the credulity of the people by divination."[161] Referring to the Khasis of Assam Lyall remarks : "In the veneration of ancestors, which is the foundation of tribal piety, the primal ancestress (ka iawbei) and her brother are the only persons regarded. The flat memorial stones set up to perpetuate the memory of the dead are called after the woman who represents the clan (maw kynthei), and the standing stones ranged behind them are dedicated to the male kinsmen on the mother's side. The powers of sickness and death are all female, and these are most frequently worshipped. The two protectors of the household are goddess...Priestesses assist at all sacrifices, and the male officiants are only their deputies."[162] The religion of the Garos also shows markedly matriarchal traces.[163]

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[157] *VGSI*, 23ff.

[158] *Ibid.*, 35ff.

[159] Dalton, *DEB*, 21 ff ; Gait, *CR*, 1891, i, 21ff ; Allen, *CR*, 1901, i, 47f ; *JASB*, xviii (1), 230 ; (2) 967 ; xli, 27.

[160] Grierson, *LSI*, ii, 59-140 ; *ZDMG*, lvi, 1-59 ; Hodgson in *JASB*, xix, 309ff.

Lady of the Mountain

From the Middle Minonan times the Aegean Mother Goddess was worshipped, along with her other forms, as the Lady of the Mountain. On some seals and signets she is represented as the Lady of the Mountain standing between rampant lions. At Knossos she is herself elevated on a mountain wearing the typical Minoan flounced skirt, holding a lance or sceptre and flanked by lions.[164] Such Mountain-goddesses are also found in different parts of the world. So far as the Indian Mother Goddess is concerned, the names Haimavatī, Girijā, Śailasutā, Śailaputrī, Vindhyavāsinī, Mandaravāsinī, etc. point to her association with the hills. Here we shall refer to Umā-Haimavatī who is one of the most important Mother Goddesses of India. It is difficult to determine her original character, because in her present form she is a composite deity. Mention of this goddess is first met with in the *Kenopaniṣad*[165] in which she is described as an abstract goddess who imparted *Brahmavidyā* to Indra. But it is difficult to say whether the Umā of the said work is same as that of the *Kumārasambhava* or of the Purāṇas. It is perhaps due to her Upaniṣadic epithet Haimavatī that in later works she has been identified with Pārvatī and Durgā. The names of these goddesses emphasise their relation with inaccessible mountain regions.

The word Pārvatī occurs in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,[166] though not in the sense of a mountain deity. The Purāṇas mention several mountain resorts of the Mother

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[161] Dalton, *DEB*, 50, [162] Intro. to Gurdon's *K* xxiii.

[163] Playfair, *G*, 80ff.

[164] Evans, *PM*, iv, 559.

[165] iii. 25.

[166] i. 5. 15. 17.

Goddess.[167] It is interesting to note that the name Umā is of non-Sanskritic origin Derivation of the word is not met with in any Sanskrit lexicon.

It appears that the name was originally associated with Ma or Amma denoting 'mother'.[168] We have already referred to the goddess Ma of Cappadocia. The word Amma or Umma denoting 'mother' was an epithet of the Chaldean Mother Goddess who was identified with Ishtar. "The Babylonian word for Mother is Umma or Uma, the Accadian Ummi, and the Dravidian is Amma. These words can be connected with each other and with Umā, the Mother Goddess."[169] In the Kuṣāṇa coins we find a a goddess called Ommo. Umā thus resembles the mountain goddesses of other countries not only in form but in name as well.

The War Goddesses

In the history of religion it is genrally found that their is a constant "struggle for existence" even among the divinities, and that the "fittest" of them can survive only by absorbing the qualities of others. Every important god or goddess must therefore be a composite character. Many of the Earth and Corn Mothers, under different historical conditions, merged their independent entities into some greater divinities. Thus the narrator of the Purāṇas knows the Corn Mother Śākambharī only as a form of the great goddess Durgā into whom she was absorbed. In the rituals of Durgā we have seen that she was primarily a goddess of vegetation and fertility, but her name suggests an association with inaccessibe mountain regions. She is also depicted equipped with arms, and conceived of as the destroyer of enemies.

The latter feature is absent in the conception of Pārvatī-Umā who belongs to the benign group of goddesses. The terrible group is represented by such goddesses as Caṇḍikā, Kālī and others. These two independent streams later united into one, and the conception of Durgā, benign and terrible, is a composite one which may have served the purpose of bridging the gap.

A terrible goddess of war is reflected in the character of Caṇḍikā or Kauśikī, the heroine of the *Devīmāhātmya*. Here we do not find the name of Umā, and Pārvatī occurs only three times, not as the daughter of Himavat, but as one dwelling in the mountains. Secondly, Caṇḍikā, far from being Śiva's consort, is nowhere associated with him. She is Viṣṇumāyā and worshipped as Nārāyaṇī. Thirdly, Caṇḍikā is purely a war-goddess, having no function other than slaying the demons. The stream

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167. e.g., according to the *Devipurāṇa* xxxviii, she lives in the Himalayas as Śivā, in the Vindhyas as Maṅgalā, in the Malaya mountains as Nandā, in the Kiṣkindhyā hills as Bhairavī, in the Kolā mountains as Mahālakṣmī, in the Sahyādri range as Kālarātri and in the Gandhamādana hills as Ambā.

168. cf. Oppert, *OII*, 421.

169. Dikshit, *MG*, 59.

introduced by Caṇḍikā was further developed in the conception of Kālī. Originally a powerful tribal goddess, she was adopted into the Brahmanical religion and identified with the goddess dwelling in the Himalayas. In the *Devīmāhātmya* she is also identified with Cāmuṇḍā on account of her slaying the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa. Grammatically Cāmuṇḍā cannot be derived from Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, and this suggests that she was a different goddess later identified with Kālī.

In many of the Purāṇas, the Devī is primarily the war-goddess who not only confers victory and success on her worshippers in the battlefield, but also actually participates in the war to deliver the world whenever it is oppressed by the demons.[170] When the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha became too powerful, the Devī, born as the offspring of Yaśodā and dwelling in the Vindhyas, destroyed them both.[171] Again, having become incarnate in the horrifying form of Raktadantikā, she slew and devoured the demons of the Vipracitti lineage and her teeth became red like the inside of a pomegranate.[172] And again, after a drought lasting hundred years, she appeared as Śatākṣī at the invocation of the sages[173] and nourished the whole world with the life-sustaining vegetables, which grew out of her own body, and thus she became famous as Śākambharī.[174] She slew the demon named Durgama and became great as Durgā.[175] Assuming the terrible form of Bhīmādevī she killed the Rākṣasas on the Mount Himavat.[176] She also killed the demon Arunākṣa in her Bhrāmarī form.[177]

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[170] *Devīmāhātmya*. xi. 41-54 ; *Vāmana*, lvi, 67-70.

[171] This goddess, identified with Kauśikī or Caṇḍikā in the *Devīmāhātmya*, is also known as Indirā, Kamalā, Lakṣmī, Śrī, Ekanaṃsā and Yoganidrā. See *Mūrtirahasya*, i. 3 ; *Harivaṃśa*, lvii ; *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, lviii. 38-39 ; *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, x, 2, 29.

[172] We have seen that red is the symbol of fertility. See Briffault, *M*, ii, 412 ff ; Thomson, *SAGS*, i, 209 ff ; Mackay, *FEM*, i, 259 ff. This goddess is also known as Raktacāmuṇḍā and Yogeśvarī. See *Varāha*, xcvi ; *Matsya*, cclxi ; *Mālatimādhava*, v. According to the *Durgābhaktitaraṅgiṇī* of Vidyāpati her symbol is Dāḍima or pomegranate. For the symbolism of pomegranate and its association with Mother Goddess see Frazer, *AAO*, 217.

[173] Śatākṣi, Śākambharī and Durgā are the names of the same vegetation deity. See Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on the *Devībhāgavata*, vii. 28. 21-30.

[174] Identified with Śatākṣi, Durgā, Umā, Gaurī, Satī, Caṇḍī, and Pārvatī. See *Mūrtirahasya*, xv ; identified with Sītā in her three forms—Śrī, Bhūmi and Nīlā. See *Sītopaniṣad*, xiii ; worshipped in Bengal as Annapūrṇā and described in such works as *Annapūrṇā-upaniṣad*, *Annadāmaṅgala*, *Annadākalpatantra*, *Karaṇāgama*, *Mantramohadadhi*, *Tantrasāra*, etc ; worshipped in Śākambharī-pītha near Saharanpur ; presiding goddess of the Sambhar Lake and tutelary deity of the Cauhans.

[175] Cf. *Devībhāgavata*, vii. 28 ; also *Skanda*, Kāśi, lxxi-lxxii ; mentioned only once in the Mahiṣāsura episode. See *Devīmāhātmya*, iv. 11 ; identified with Bhadrakālī and Ugracaṇḍā. See *Kalikāpurāṇa*, lx. 118-19.

[176] Also known as Ekavīrā and Kālarātri. cf. *Devībhāgavata*, vii. 30 ; *Skanda*, Kumārikā, xxxix ; Uttara, lxxxi.

[177] The goddess Bhramaravāsinī is mentioned in Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (Stein, *RT*, ii, 279 ff). The *Pīṭhanirṇaya* says that the goddess is worshipped at Janasthāna as Bhrāmarī. We also find one Bhramarāmbā worshipped on the Śrīparvata in the Ballamalur range to the south of the Krishna.

Elesewhere we have seen that Durgā was originally a goddess of vegetation, later transformed into a goddess of war. This also held good in the case of Phrygian Cybele. To account for this metamorphosis something may be suggested. Agricultural communities, even today, have to live with uncertainty. In addition to flood, drought and other calamities of nature, they also have to contend with the oppression of the surplus-enjoying class. Perhaps this class was reflected in the conception of the demons vanquished by the goddess. The goddess must fight against natural disasters and against the privileged class in order to secure the agricultural yields for her worshippers. In fact, everywhere tyranny and oppression have given rise to the ethical concept of the conflict between good and evil, and of the final triumph of the former over the latter. This must have something to do with the Devī's fight against the Asuras.

CHAPTER FIVE

MOTHER RIGHT

In the first chapter we have seen that the worship of the Great Mother which is so prominent a feature of the religion of the agricultural people had its origin in mother-right.[1] The principles of mother-right seem to have developed particularly among agricultural tribes dependent on the economic role of women as the first agriculturists.[2] "Where agriculture, which from the first has been the province of women, has developed on an important scale without any intervening pastoral stage, the matriarchal order has often persisted and has even become accentuated in relatively advanced phases of culture......The development of agricultural civilization without any intervening pastoral phase enhanced the matriarchal position of women not only as owners and heiresses of the arable land but also through their traditional association with agricultural magic and religion, which assumed in archaic societies a momentous development in correlation with that of agricultural pursuits, the women retaining for a long period the character of priestess."[3] With the development of agriculture in its higher forms women ceased to be cultivators of the soil and their economic importance came to an end. In parts of Africa, where the plough is a recent acquisition, the change-over can be seen taking place at the present day.[4] Krige writes : "Now-a-days, this rule (that the soil is tilled by women) has been relaxed owing to the influence of the European civilization. With the introduction of the ox-drawn plough, men have come to do all ploughing, because women may not work with the cattle."[5] In Nigeria, where the transition is quite recent, it is due to the influence of the British officers.[6]

Anthropologists on Mother-right

In 1861, Johann Jacob Bachofen in his *Das Mutterrecht* challenged for the first time the prevailing patriarchal theory of social evolution. Having found evidence of matrilineal descent in ancient Greece and among the primitive peoples of Africa and the Americas, he formulated that in the beginning a condition of promiscuity prevailed which was followed by mother-right. Then men gained the ascendancy and patriarchy was permanently established. A few years later, John Ferguson McLennan set forth the same hypothesis in his *Primitive Marriage* (published in 1865 and re-issued in 1876 as *Studies in Ancient History*) and outlined his theory of social evolution, postulating small, promiscuous groups initially, with kinship recognised in female line. Promiscuity was seen leading to polyandry, the reckoning of descent in the male line and eventually to marriage within the group. H. L. Morgan, in his *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1869) and subsequently in his *Ancient Society* (1877) formulated an evolutionary scheme which conceived of culture as having developed in a comparable manner the world over through successive stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization. On the basis of his interpretation of kinship terms as survivals of previous marriage forms, he contended that marriage had evolved from promiscuity through a series of progressive stages to monogamy and that descent through the maternal line had preceded descent through paternal line, the former passing to the latter when property relations were established and paternity was no longer doubtful.

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[1] See my paper 'Śāktism and Mother-right' in *SCT*, 66ff.

[2] Hobhouse etc., *MCSISP*, 22 ; Childe, *NL*, 84ff ; Ehrenfels, *MRI*, 7-8.

[3] Briffault, *M*, ii, 251.

[4] Thomson, *SAGS*, i, 42.

[5] Krige, *SSZ*, 190.

[6] Meek, *SK*, 49, 61.

Many later writers, following Bachofen, McLennan and Morgan, held that mother-right was the natural consequence of promiscuity. The practice of counting descent, argued Bloch,[7] originated at a time when absolutely no connexion was known to exist between pregnancy and sexual intercourse. The idea that it is solely exclusively the mother who builds the child's body, the father in no way contributing to its formation, is still found among some Australian and Melanesian tribes.[8] "Paternity", remarked Sir Henry Maine,[9] "is a matter of inference as opposed to maternity which is a matter of observation." The less important the fatherhood in a society, the more will that society be driven to base its rights upon the mother. The followers of Bachofen also assumed that mother-right had everywhere preceded father-right. "It may be said without any fear of contradiction," remarked Sidney Hartland,[10] "that while no case is known where matrilineal reckoning betrays evidence of having been preceded by paternal descent, the converse has been observed in every part of the world". N. W. Thomas suggested that patrilineal descent might have been directly evolved without the intermediate stage of reckoning through females, but he seemed to consider it more probable that it had everywhere been preceded by female descent.[11] F. Graebner and W. Schmidt, on the other hand, believed that in most parts of the world matrilineal migrants must have settled among earlier patrilineal peoples so that the main change had been from father-right to mother-right and not in the reverse direction. According to them, these types of settlements were responsible for the growth of various forms of intermediate stages between the two kinds of society which are found in so many parts of the world. O. R. Ehrenfels, whose work on Indian mother-right is a significant contribution, was also influenced by the migration theories of Graebner and Schmidt. Sir James Frazer,

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7. *SLOT*, 189 ; James, *PR*, 153.
8. Malinowsky, *SSLNMW*, 140-178 ; Spencer and Gillen, *NoTCA*, 145ff.
9. *DCLC*, 202.
10. *PP*, ii, 3 ; cf. Bloch, *SLOT*, 194 ; Thomas, *SS*, 67 ; Russell, *TCCPI*, i, 139 ; Lang, *SO*, 21.
11. *KOGMA*, 15.

whose views we shall quote in subsequent section, used the principles of mother-right to explain certain features of religious beliefs and practices, especially those concerned with the cult of the Mother Goddess.

In a remarkable article written about 1915 by W.H.R. Rivers in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*,[12] mother-right is considered as a highly complex condition in which a good number of social processes is involved, e.g. descent, kinship, inheritance, succession, authority, marriage, etc. Distribution and varieties of mother-right in different continents of the world are also discussed and it is claimed that the Iroquois, Hurons, Pueblo and Seri Indians of the Americas and a few other peoples in different parts of the world have mother-right in pure form as the basis of their social organisation. Copious illustrations of matriliny and matrilocal marriage are also cited and it is concluded that in several parts of the world, we have definite evidence that a condition of mother-right has changed either into one of father-right or into a form of social organisation in which social rights are recognised with the relatives of both father and mother. But a reaction leading to another theoretical formulation against mother-right was gaining ground side by side. Westermarck,[13] whose basic purpose was to refute Morgan, for example, made a violent charge against the validity of the hypothesis of mother-right, and his stand was supported, fully or partly by most leading anthropologists of his time including Goldenweiser,[14] Horatio Hale[15] and Van Gennep.[16] The works of Westermarck suddenly became the bible of social sciences, the cause of which we shall relate in the next section, and they remained so until the twenties of this century when their conclusions were assailed and annihilated by Briffault. In his great theoretical contribution, *The Mothers* (1927), Briffault pointed out that Westermarck distorted evidence out of all proportion. One of the strongest supporters of Morgan, Briffault marshalled on his side a mass of data, far more copious and concrete than had ever been adduced against him. According to Briffault, matrilocal marriage is certainly suggestive of a higher social status of women and it is the original form of marriage union. The practice of matrilocal marriage is still found among a large number of peoples and it has left a clear trace of its former prevalence among all other peoples. Since man's period of growth is protracted, it was the females whose maternal functions placed them in control of the group. All the cultural traits including the habits, norms of behaviour, inherited traditions, etc. were formed and transmitted by women. Far from representing the constitutionally weaker sex, women are more powerful than the men and that they were more efficient fighters, even distinguished by greater cruelty. "The differentiation of the man as the warrior and fighter is certainly not due to any constitutional indisposition or incapacity in primitive women, but to economic necessities...While women are frequently known to share in the active pursuit of men, the constructive occupations which have given rise to the development of material culture belong, in rudest societies, almost exclusively to the sphere of women's work, and the men take no share in them. All industries were at first home industries and developed therefore in the hands of women." The economic ground of matripotestality, on which Briffault laid emphasis, has frequently been pointed out in the present work. But it is surprising that Westermarck has got a fresh revival in subsequent anthropology while Briffault's name has become practically a *taboo*. The reason will be stated in the next section.

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[12] viii. 851ff.

[13] *HHM*, i, chs. 3-9.

[14] *AA*.(NS, xiii), 603.

[15] *S*, xix, 30.

[16] *MLA*, intro xxxii.

From Bachofen's striking formulation in 1861 to Robert Briffault's extraordinary publication in 1927, the concept of mother-right was accorded a special place among anthropological studies. But with the decline of the evolutionist method of approach, the principles of mother-right began to be treated with diminishing importance by the greater section of the western anthropologists. In 1926, Malinowski declared that the task of social anthropology should be aimed at the understanding of the nature of culture, rather than at conjectural reconstructions of its evolution or of past events. It should be aimed at the explanation of anthropological facts at all levels of development by their function, by the part which they play within the integral system of culture, by the manner in which they are related to each other within the system, and by the manner in which this system is related to the physical surroundings. Following Malinowsky, Radcliffe Brown also defined a social system as consisting of "the total *social structure* of society together with the totality of *social usages* in which that structure appears and on which it depends for its continued existence." As his theory developed, he laid increasing stress on the comparative analysis of social structures as the primary aim of social anthropology. Claiming social anthropology to be a natural science of society to which the conjectural history resorted to by the older anthropologists is irrelevant, he sought to establish general tendencies or laws underlying the diversities of human social life. Applying this principle, Radcliffe Brown and his followers claim to have *swept away the fog of pseudohistorical misunderstanding* of the social basis of the clans, totemism, mother-right and other classical problems of anthropology. Now it remains to be seen how far their claim is valid.

The Class Outlook

From the time when the concept of mother-right was formulated, it was always assumed that the treatment of the subject lay in organising all the available materials within one vast theoretical set-up, usually of an evolutionary nature. As we have seen above, the Functionalists reject this approach and insist on specialised analysis and comparison of existing systems and institutions like matriliny, matrilocal marriage and residence, etc, without bothering whether these may be regarded as the vestiges of the earlier presence of mother-right. Speculations about the early origins of human institutions which formerly provided the main drive for the beginning of anthropology are abandoned by them as unprofitable. But this professed objectivity, as Chattopadhyaya rightly observers,[17] also proves to be an illusion in the last analysis, because the ideas and values of contemporary society are very much likely to influence the basic outlook of the anthropologist and the historian. Thus the study of ancient Indian society has always been prejudiced by class outlook. This is nakedly mainfested even in the recent volumes of the *History and Culture of the Indian People* published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan. Very few monographs regarding the real position and social role of the oppressed class have hitherto been published. It is difficult to explain the scholars' lack of interest in the fortunes of the lower class unless we suppose that their vision was circumscribed by dominant class outlook, both of their own age and the age they studied.[18]

Since Darwin, the doctrine of evolution, which harmonized perfectly the philosophy of the ruling class of that day justifying the *status quo* of the nineteenth century Europe, became the basis of social anthropology. Writers in this field, really anxious to find out universal evolutionary laws explaining the rise of man from the ugliness of primitivism to the refinement of the nineteenth century civilization, concluded that society had passed through certain definite stages, a constant progression from the lower to the higher. So long as Morgan's theories did not wound the basic values and class outlook of the nineteenth century, he was tolerated. After all, one should expect savages to be elevated in morality, and if they practised promiscuity, that is all the more reason why civilized men should practise monogamy! Thus the theories of Morgan determined the character of the important researches of Bandelier and Powell in America, of Fison and Howitt in Australia, of Strenberg and other European anthropologists. His views of kinship influenced Rivers and Frazer. But danger began when some progressive thinkers insisted upon interpreting evolution *as a relative instead of an absolutistic concept*, when Friedrich Engels based his *Origin of the Family* on Morgan, when Kautsky used Morgan's evidence in his *Entstehung der Ehi und Familie*, when Plekhanov made frequent references to Morgan. The Marxist writers, following Morgan, pointed out that the institutions of the nineteenth century civilization could no longer be looked upon as a culmination in evolutionary advance. Private property, monogamy and the family, for example, which are inalienable parts of the bourgeois civilization, cannot be considered as indestructible. These are but parts of a process and not a fulfillment of it.

These revolutionary implications of Morganism severely acted upon the existing class outlook. It was not the doctrine itself, but its widespread acceptance by the revolutionary thinkers of the period, that made it suddenly 'bitterly repugnant' to the nineteenth century mind. So a new set of justifications was needed to defend the permanency of the prevailing values. The existence of primitive communism was fought tooth and nail ; private property was declared an instinct fundamental to all men ; family was defended as the corner-stone of culture and monogamy was declared the basic form of marriage. In establishing these absolutes, no evidence, however doubtful and absurd, was unexploited. As a saviour appeared Westermarck whose doctrines were accepted *in toto* because they did more than confute the doctrines of Morgan. Though he distorted evidence out of all proportion, influenced by the middle class culture of his day and the necessity of defending its institutions by every device of logic, his theories were taken as final because they supplied a protection against those doctrines that threatened the middle class supremacy in the field of ethics and economics. And not only Westermarck had been conspicuous in the defence of the bourgeois institutions. Many of the subsequent anthropologists have rallied to its support. Malinowsky, Thomas, Lowie, Radcliffe Brown and the later Functionalists, for instance, have all lent their aid to the cause. This also explains why Briffault is generally avoided, why his views are not mentioned in the anthropological text books and why in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* his biography as an anthropologist does not occur.

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[17] *L*, 120.

[18] cf. Sharma, *LEISE*, 8-9.

The Functionalists hold that *empirically* matrilineal and partilineal descent groups have important structural differences, since specific males (as husband, father, father's father) hold formal authority over the patrilineal group, while under matriliny other males (as brother, mother's brother, mother's mother's brother) have such authority ; this means that no known descent group, matrilineal or patrilineal, is matripotestal; i.e. there was no mother-right. This is what Marx calls judicial blindnes : "Even the best minds absolutely fail to see—on principle, owing to a certain judical blindness—things which lie in front of their noses."[19] They fail to see that the evidence which they frequently cite are largely of the nature of the extant cases from one stage to another that the growth of many primitive communities has been retarded by economic difficulties of their habitat, and that the more backward peoples have been continually subjected to the cultural influence of the more advanced.

The Economic Perspective

Things like matriliny or matrilocal marriage are not and cannot be 'things-in-themselves'. The early evolutionists, however, offered some explanation, taking matriliny, matrilocal marriage, avunculate, etc. as the natural concomitants of a system called mother-right and attempted to account for the origin and development of the latter. But the defect of their explanations lay in the fact that they overlooked the material basis of such systems and institutions, the economic basis of the social domination of the sexes.

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[19] *SC*, 242.

The historical envirmonment of a given society is determined by the mode of securing its material subsistence, as we have pointed occasionally in this work. No culture can be understood unless all its nutritive institutions are worked out in direct reference to the food production. It has been observed that mother-right is not found among peoples living by herding large animals, nor among those who live mostly on hunting. It is not often found (though its relics are found) where food is grown by ploughing. It is found primarily among peoples who live by agriculture but who do not use the plough. This, as we have stressed elsewhere, can be explained as follows: Originally the clan centred in the women on whose responsibility rested the esentially important function of rearing up the young and of imparting to them whatever could be characterised as the human heritage at the pre-hunting stage. With subsequent changes in the mode of food-gathering and food production the *patria potestas* began to be imposed upon step by step. The process began with hunting, probably with the invention of the spear, and in the post-hunting age, among those peoples that developed pastoral economy, male supremacy came to exercise even greater hold, because stock-raising is almost everywhere man's work. But where agriculture predominated over hunting in providing food, it accordingly raised the status of women, because agriculture was their invention and business, at least till the invention of the cattle-drawn plough. Thus among the peoples that discovered agriculture, there was a revival of female superiority. But with further development of agriculture, more specially with the introduction of the cattle-drawn plough this *matria potestas* was finally overthrown.

How, it may be asked, if descent was originally matrilineal, has it come about that some of the most backward peoples reckon descent through the father, while others more advanced, retain the older from ? The answer, as given by Thomson, is that "the sexual division of labour characteristic of a hunting economy is such as to impart to that economy an inherent tendency to paternal descent. The reason why so high a proportion of modern hunting tribes are patrilineal is that their economic life has been arrested at that level. Conversely, when we find, as we shall find, that in the prehistory of civilized peoples matrilineal descent persisted to a much higher stage than the ethnographical data might lead us to expect, the explanation is that these peoples passed rapidly through hunting to agriculture."[20]

Ehrenfels and Chattopadhyaya on Indian Mother-right

Indeed, a predominantly agricultural country like India, with her stunted economic development accounting for the strong survival of tribal elements, is only likely to be full of matriarchal relics. Baron Omar Rolf Ehrenfels,[21] to whom goes the entire credit of collecting all the matriarchal data and organising them in a theoretical set up, clearly observed that mother-right elements in India were stronger, both in extent and in degree, than those in any part of the world, and from this he asserted that a primitive form of agriculture, and along with it a form of mother-right first developed originally in India, and this Indian mother-right appeared to have created the ancient matriarchal civilizations in the Mediterranean Basin, Oriental Africa, the Near East and specially Southern Arabia. His hypothesis of India being the original home and migration centre of mother-right may not be correct, since he was influenced by the diffusionist tradition of Ratzel, Graebner, Schmidt, etc., but the fact remains that the extensive survivals of mother-right in India, of which copious examples are furnished by him, require positive explanation.

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[20] *SAGS*, i. 43.

More important than all these are his observations on the violent overthrow of the ancient mother-right in India which took place in an abrupt and essentially artificial way through 'three typically Indian institutions'. *viz.* hypergamy, child-marriage and *satī* (burning of widows). According to Ehrenfels, hypergamy was a means to subdue the female position in society by forcing upon her social inferiority in matrimonial relations. The principle of hypergamy in India developed in the desire of a patriarchally organised people to force the idea of the superiority of men on women, whose spirit of independence and self-confidence was rooted in the old tradition of a matriarchally organised society. The prevalence of infant marriage in India is also subject to the same explanation, while the bad position of the widow, intensified to the extreme in the custom of burning her alive has been evolved in the struggle between the originally matriarchal and the immigrated patriarchal system of society as a means to subdue the former by the religious rules of the latter. Such extravagant means of breaking the resistance of matriarchy was called for, parallels of which are, according to Ehrenfels, scarcely to be found anywhere else in human history. But why such extravagant measures ? The special vigour to overthrow mother-right must have necessarily implied, as Ehrenfels rightly claims, a corresponding special vigour which mother-right must have been enjoying in India since pre-Vedic days. It was this that yielded such a strong opposition to the patriarchal tendencies of the Aryan new-comers. We are really thankful to Ehrenfels, because he is the only writer to have insisted that the ruthless efforts to establish male-superiority resulted in the institutions of hypergamy, child-marriage and *satī*. But even then, as Ehrenfels himself has shown, the matriarchal culture elements could not be stamped out from the lives of the masses. What could have been the reason for the extensive survival of mother-right in India ?

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[21] *MRI*, 18ff ; see especially 121-29, 201-4.

Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya,[22] whose contribution to the study of Indian mother-right is really significant after the work of Ehrenfels, has treated the problem from a strictly economic point of view and argued that, if the undeveloped agricultural economy had a natural tendency to create matriarchal society and if by far the largest proportion of the Indian masses remained predominantly agricultural, it was but logical that the most extravagant methods would have been necessary to coerce upon them the supremacy of the male. He holds that because agriculture was the discovery of women, the initial stage of agricultural economy created the material conditions for the social supremacy of the female. Thus mother-right in India was historically connected with the early agricultural economy, and that was, in all probability violently suppressed in the subsequent days. Yet the peculiar tenacity with which the elements of mother-right have survived in the lives of the Indian people is quite striking. The probable reason is that the majority of them still remain the tillers of the soil. By contrast, the economic life of the early Vedic people was predominantly pastoral. That accounts for their highly organised patriarchal society with a characteristically male dominated world outlook. It is here that we have the real clue to the basic difference between the two main currents of the subsequent religio-philosophical thought in India, the Vedic and the non-Vedic. A predominant, if not the most conspicuous, feature of the female dominated world view is Tantricism, with its supreme emphasis on *prakṛti* or the female principle. Among the vast masses of the Indian peasantry male deities have only a secondary position. The root of this Mother Goddess cult has been traced not to the Vedas, but to the pre-Vedic ruins of the Harappa culture. The pre-Vedic Mother Goddess, according to Marshall, must have originated in a matriarchal state of society.[23] Long before Marshall, as early as 1916, R. P. Chanda[24] pointed out that "the Sākta conception of the Devī, as Ādyā-Śakti, 'the primordial energy', and Jagadambā, 'the mother of the universe', also very probably arose where matriarchate or mother-kin was prevalent." Thus, the principles of mother-right give the only possible background to understand the sources of the widely prevailing Tantricism, of the Sāṅkhya philosophy which forms the substratum of Tantricism itself, and of many customs and rituals associated with the cult of the Mother Goddess.

The Sacred Queen

Arrian says that Asia Minor had been ruled by women ever since the legendary days of Semiramis.[25] "Probably in Minoan Crete," says Hall,[26] "woman played a greater part than they did even in Egypt, and it may eventually appear that religious matters, perhaps even the Government and the Sate as well, were largely controlled by women. The legendary Amazons were a people ruled by women, who retained in their own hands the control of all public affairs.[27] Such Amazonian legends are also found in many other countries, and they are not without significance.

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[22] *L*, 232ff.
[23] *MIC*, i, 51.
[24] *IAR*, 153.
[25] *EA*, i, 23.7.
[26] *AHNE*, 47ff.

Bachofen in his *Die Sage von Tanaquil* sought to prove that in ancient Italy the reign of a strong paternal authority had been preceded by a state of exclusive matriarchy, chiefly represented by the Etruscans. In China, as late as the third century of the Christian era, women could hold office and exercise administrative functions and that right did not disappear until the eighth century.[28] The Nue' Kum tribe was said to be permanently ruled by a woman, the supreme authority being confined to the female descendants of the ruling family.[29] In southern China, the Su-mu tribe was ruled by a queen, the office being hereditary within a sacred clan.[30] In many of the primitive types of African monarchy, the royal family or sacred clan consisted of women only. The head woman of the clan might herself exercise all the functions of royalty or might depute one of her sons to act for her under her authority. In Lunda, the queen-mother ruled jointly with the king, and in every case she was the supreme authority.[31] In the rich barbaric country of Benin the queen-mother did everything which the king did.[32] Among the Khasis of Assam, in a few territories, the High Priestess and actual head of the state was a woman who combined in her person sacerdotal and regal functions.[33]

Not only among the Khasis of Assam, but also in many parts of Tibet, political as well as religious functions were vested in women.[34] The Incas of Peru held that they descended from a mythical queen called Mamaccoya, the mother of the royal clan, and accordingly adopted the practice of dynastic incest which has the only means of combining a male succession with the original female succession.[35] The same method was adopted in Hawaii.[36] In Tahiti, royalty was hereditary through women and matriarchal endogamy was the common practice.[37] In Samoa, it was the eldest sister who performed the functions of priestess.[38] In the African kingdom of Urua, the king had to marry his sister or first cousin and the queen had to be consulted in all matters. When any queen died, the king had to remain with her corpse night and day for a week.[39] The inhabitants of Uganda who belong to a higher stage of culture were practically governed by the queen-mother and the queen-sister. The ordinary Bagandas took their totem from the father's side while the royal family took theirs from the mother's side. The queen-sister was chosen by the queen-mother who sat on the same throne as the king at the coronation ceremonies, and took the same oath.[40] Referring to the Banyoro Kingdom of Central Africa, Rescoe wrote : "Since the present king became a Christian he has had only one wife, who, however, as she is neither his half-sister nor a princess, cannot take the position nor the title of the queen ; and the rank is held by a princess who is only nominally the wife of the king".[41] This shows that the ancient usages were inconsistent with the new faith and the king had to find a plan to escape the horns of a dilemma. A similar compromise was adopted by the Banyankole.[42] The sacred kings of Shilluk, who offer a significant illustration to Sir Frazer's well-known theory of the dying god, traced their descent and royal right from a divine ancestress.[43] Livingstone wrote that the Bechuana chief Sàbituane depended on his daughter's wisdom who was made chieftain after her father's death and was asked by her father not to marry any man but take as many lovers as she pleased.[44] In the kingdom of Dahomi the same usage was in vogue until recent times, the princesses being free to choose as many lovers as they liked.[45] In Ashanti, so unimportant was the paternal descent of the king that the princesses of the royal house were free to marry whomsoever they pleased, be he the meanest slave.[46] The royal princesses of Benin did not marry, but took any man they pleased as their lover.[47] "In the more backward kingdoms of Loango, Daura, and the Abrons of the Ivory Coast, the king had hardly any power at all, and he was the son of a slave. In Agonna, Latuka, Ubemba and elsewhere, there was no king. The ruler was a queen who did not marry but had servile lovers".[48]

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[27] Herodotus, iv, 110ff ; Strabo, xi.5.
[28] Giles, *CC*, ii, 197.
[29] Gay, *C*, ii, 307.
[30] Gill, *RGS*, i.365.
[31] Cameron, *AA*, 157.
[32] Roth, *GB*, 37, 119, 180.
[33] See Gurdon, *K*, xxiv.
[34] Rockhill, *LL*, 213, 219, 339ff.
[35] Gambosa, *HI*, 123-24.
[36] Jarves, *HHI*, 213ff.
[37] Ellis, *PR*, 99, 287ff.
[38] Stair, *OS*, 222.
[39] Cameron, *AA*, 334, 337, 362.

Sir James Frazer[49] holds that the kingship at Rome was originally a plebian institution and it descended through women, that the people who founded the sanctuary of Diana at Nemi were of the same plebian stock as the Roman kings, and that they worshipped a great Mother Goddess, not a great Father God. That goddess was Diana, the Latin form of the Greek Artemis. On the other hand, the patricians, who afterwards invaded the country, brought with them father-right in its strictest form, and consistently enough, paid their devotions to Father Jupiter rather than to Mother Juno. Frazer also says that at Rome the Fliamen Dialis was bound to vacate his priesthood on the death of his wife, the Flaminica. The latter had originally been the more important functionary of the two and the former held office only by virtue of his marriage with the latter. He and his wife represented an old line of priestly kings and queens, who played the parts of Jupiter and Juno, or perhaps Dianus and Diana respectively. The custom which obliged him to resign his priesthood on the death of his wife seems to prove that of the two deities, whom they personated, the goddess was indeed the better half. At Rome the goddess Juno always played an insignificant part whereas at Nemi Diana was all powerful. The superiority of the Flaminica over the Flamen indicates that the divine originals of the two were Dianus and Diana rather than Jupiter and Juno ; and further, that if Jupiter and Juno at Rome stood for the principle of father-right, or the predominance of the husband over the wife, Dianus and Diana stood for the older principle of mother-right, or the predominance of the wife in matter of inheritance over the husband.

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[40] Roscoe, *B*, 114, 205, 210, 325.

[41] *SCA*, 172.

[42] Roscoe, *Ban*, 59ff.

[43] Gleichen, *AES*, i, 179.

[44] *MTRSA*, 179.

[45] Ellis, *ESP*, 204.

[46] Idem, *TSP*, 287, 297ff.

[47] Roth, *GB*, 37, 119, 180.

[48] Thomson, *SAGS*, i, 157.

[49] See Frazer's, *MOK*.

As among the ancient Romans we have the superiority of the priestess over the priest based on a corresponding superiority of the goddess over the god, so among the Khasis of Assam, who preserve to this day the ancient system of mother-right in matters of inheritance and religion, the goddesses predominate over the gods and the priestesses over the priests. The Khasi priest is usually called Lyngdoh or Langdoh. The nature of his work varies in different Siemships, but there is one point in which we find agreement everywhere. The Lyngdoh must be assisted at the time of performing sacrifices by a female priestess called *ka-soh-blei*, *ka-soh-sla*, or simply *ka-lyngdoh*. The priest merely acts as her deputy when sacrificing. The High Priestess of Nongkrem has not only many duties to perform, she is also the actual head of the state at the same time, although she delegates her temporal powers to one of her sons, or nephews, who thus becomes Siem. The *siem-sad*, or priestess, at Maw-synram, on the appointof a new Siem or chief, has to assist at certain sacrifices. In the Khyrim State, the Lyngdoh is assisted by a priestess called *ka-soh-sla*, who is his mother, sister, niece, or some other maternal relation. It is the duty of the priestess to prepare all the sacrificial articles, and without her assistance the sacrifice cannot take place. Among the Khasis, as at Rome, a priest would clearly have to vacate his office if he had no woman of the proper relationship to assist him in the performance of his sacred duties.[50] The ancient priestesses were born of the earliest magicians whose responsibility was the performance of the rites designed to promote the success of agriculture, and accordingly the royal office was usually filled by a woman, and the queen, was in every stage of development of that office, considerably more important than the king.[51]

Evidence of the Ancient Civilizations

The urban civilizations of the Nile, Euphratis and Indus drew their wealth from the soil, and therefore the relics of matriarchal culture are clearly discernible in them. In Egypt the normal rule of inheritance was that a man's property passed to the eldest daughter.[52] The constitution of Egyptian society and of the family was characterised, says H. R. Hall, by "a distinct preservation of matriarchy, the prominent position of women, and a comparative promiscuity in sexual relation......The most important person in the family was not the father, but the mother".[53] Petrie writes : "In question of descent the female line was principally regarded. The mother's name is always given, the father's name may be omitted".[54] The "nomes" or primitive local totemic clans were maternal clans, or motherhoods ; the headship of the "nomes" was transmitted through women.[55] "The family in Egypt was based on matriarchal system, the office-holder or farmer who married into a family was a secondary affair ; the house and property went with the women and daughters".[56] "The Egyptian woman of the lower and middle class", says Sir Gaston Mespero, "was more respected, more independent than any other woman in the world. As wife, she is the real mistress of the house, her husband being, so to speak, merely a privileged guest."[57]

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[50] Gurdon, *K*, 120-24.

[51] cf. *supra*.

Robertson Smith believes that all the Semitic peoples were originally matriarchal. From a close study of the ancient Semitic Cultures he came to the conclusion that Mother-right in various cases was the result of matrilocal marriage and that when matrilocal and patrilocal marriages occured side by side among the same people the descent was reckoned through the mother if the husband lived with his wife's people, and through the father if the wife lived with her husband's people.[58] Ibn Batuta wrote that women of Zebid did not follow their husbands.[59] Women in ancient Arabia were commonly the owners of wealth ; they possessed large flocks and herds, and their husbands so commonly acted as the herdsmen of their wives' flocks that the phrase "I will no longer drive thy flocks to pasture" was a habitual formula of divorce [60] In the *Old Testament* we find that with the Hebrews the regular practice for the man was to "leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife", that is, to take up his abode with his wife's clan [61] Jacob lived twenty years in the home of his wives,[62] and when he slipped away his father-in-law Laban, pursued him and told him that he had no right to take his wives away, or even his own children, and claimed them as belonging to their mother's father.[63] Samson's wife lived with her own people.[64]

Matriarchal institutions have been traced in ancient Elam from where they were transmitted to the Persian emperors. The queen-mother Atossa, whose second husband was Darius, married her brother Kambyses, and after his death she continued to hold all the power.[65] Herodotus says that the Lykians reckoned descent in the female and not in the male line : if you ask a man who he is, he replies by naming his mother and mother's mother.[66] Sarpedon, the leader of the Lykians, is said to have inherited the crown from his mother,[67] and Bellerophon acquires a title to the throne by marrying a royal princess.[68] Among the Karians, who lived in the Anatolian sea-board, the kings observed matriarchal endogamy like the Pharaohs of Egypt : Artemisia, the eldest daughter of Hekatomnos, succeeded her father on the throne of Karia, and married her brother Mausolos, to whom, after his death, she erected the famous Mausoleum. She abdicated in favour of her sister Ada, who married her younger brother Hidius according to the Karian custom. She governed alone after his death "for it was the custom that women should rule equally with men."[69] Herodotus says that at the time of the Persian war Halikarnassos was under another Karian queen of the same name (Artemisia) whose domain extended to the adjacent islands of Kos, Kalymnos and Nisyros and who furnished Xarxes with a contingent of five warships, commanded by herself, when the Persian monarch invaded Greece, and whose spirited leadership led the Persian king to remark that his men had behaved like women and his women like men.[70] Amongst the Lydians, men were subject to female domination ; their women chose their own husbands and disposed of themselves as they pleased before marriage.[71] The Mysians who were a branch of the Lydians and kinsmen of the Karians also seem to be a matriarchal people.[72] "Among the Kantaberians", says Starbo, "the men bring dowries to the women. With them the daughters, alone inherit property. Brothers are given in marriage by their sisters. In all their usages the social condition is one of gynaecocracy."[73]

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[52] Breasted, *HI*, i, 86.

[53] *ERE*, v, 733.

[54] Petrie, *SLAE*, 119.

[55] Erman, *LAE*, 92.

[56] Petrie, *SLAE*, 109.

[57] *LAEA*, 11.

[58] *KMEA*, 74ff.

[59] *Ibid.*, 79.

[60] *Ibid.*, 117.

[61] *Genesis*, ii, 24.

[62] *Ibid.*, xxxi, 38.

[63] *Ibid.*, xxxi, 26, 31, 43.

[64] *Judges*, xv, 1.

[65] Herodotus, vii, 3, 4 ; cf. iii, 31, 68, 88.

"In Sparta", says Polybius, "several brothers had often one wife between them and the children were brought up in common."[74] Spartan women were commonly consulted on political questions. They could inherit and bestow property as heiresses. In fact, nearly all property in Sparta was in their hands.[75] The Athenian mythical traditions also preserve the relics of mother-right. Patrilocal marriage is said to have been introduced by Kekrops, the mythical king who preceded Deukalion.[76] Augustine refers to the famous contest between Athena and Poseiden for the possession of the city which was decided by the votes of the Athenian citizens, and the goddess came out successful, thanks to the votes of the womenfolk.[77] The Greek gods and heroes are specifically referred to by the names of their mothers, as 'Apollo the son of Leto, 'Dionysos, the son of Semele', 'Heracles, the son of Alkmena', 'Achillis, the son of Thetis', and so forth. In the *Odyssey*[78] we come across a passage in which Alkinoos says to Odysseus : "I should wish that so goodly a man as thou art and so like-minded with me, would take my daughter to wife, and be called my son, and abide with me ; a house and possessions would I give thee if thou wouldst accept and remain". Referring to the social conditions of the heroic age Gilbert Murray says : "House and property belonged to the women, and descended from mother to daughter. The father did not count—at least not primarily—in the reckoning of relationship. He did not count for something, since exogamy, not endogamy, was the rule. The sons went off to foreign villages to serve and marry women in possession of land there. Their sisters, we have reason to believe, generally provided them with dowries."[79] "It is certain", says Ridgeway,[80] "that at Athens there had been a time when descent was traced and property passed through the females." Butler says : "Throughout the Odyssey, it was the women who are directing, counselling, and protecting the men."[81] 'The singular custom of the Lykians of tracing their descent by the maternal line obtained also among the Etruscans."[82] On funeral monuments the name of the deceased is usually the matronymic.[83] They had sexual communism ; no word for 'father' has yet been detected in their inscriptions ; the word denoting 'husband' and 'wife' are also somewhat doubtful.[84] Uncertainty of the Latin nobility as to their paternal descent was shared by the kings of Rome themselves. Not only Romulus, but also Ancus Martius and Servius Tullius, knew their mothers, but not their fathers.[85]

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[66] *Ibid..* i, 73, 5.

[67] *Iliad*, vi, 196-199.

[68] *Ibid.*, vi, 192f.

[69] Arrian, *EA*, i, 23.

[70] Herodotus vii, 99 ; viii, 87-88, 93, 103.

[71] *Ibid.*, i, 93 ; Strabo, xi, 16.

[72] *Ibid.*, i, 171 ; vii, 74.

[73] Strabo, iii, 165.

[74] Polybius, xii, 6.

[75] Aristotle, *Politika*, ii, 6, 11.

[76] Justin, ii, 6, 7.

[77] *De Civitate Die*, xviii, 9.

[78] *Odyssey*, vii, 311ff.

Matriarchal relics are found among the patriarchal Teutons also. We read in the epic of *Beowulf* that when Hygelac was dead his widow Hygd handed over to Beowulf the treasury and the government.[86] Canute the Dane, after having overthrown Ethelred, married the latter's old queen to ensure his usurpation.[87] Hamlet's uncle, Feng, obtained the Danish Crown in the same manner ; Wiglet killed Hamlet in order to obtain possession of Hamlet's wife and kingdom.[88] Among the Scandinevians, the kingdom passed to the daughters and their husbands as late as the eighth century.[89] The Celts were matriarchal people : "Irish and Welsh divine and heroic groups were named after the mother, not the father", says MacCulloch.[90] In Irish traditional myths the women and goddesses play chief part ; the heroines "abide in their place, and they allure or compel their mortal lovers to resort to them. Connela and Bran and Oisis must all leave this earth and sail across the ocean or lake before they can rejoin their ladylove ; even Cuchulainn, mightiest of all the heroes, is constrained, struggle as he may, to go and dwell with the fairly queen Fand, who had wooed him. She chooses, whom she will, and is no man's slave ; herself she offers freely, but she abandones not her liberty."[91] Ancient graves of the Bronze age in Great Britain show that the wealth of the sepultural ornaments of women surpass in splendour the armour of the warriors.[92] Tacitus tells that among the Britons "the laws make no distinction between the sexes."[93]

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[79] *RGE*, 98.
[80] Ridgeway, *OT*, 198ff.
[81] Butler, *AO*, 107.
[82] Dennis, *CCE*, i, LV.
[83] Taylor *ER*, 256f.
[84] *Ibid.*, 245.
[85] Pliny, ii, 241 ; xxxvi, 204 ; Livy, i, 32.
[86] Chadwick, *HA*, 312.
[87] Freeman, *HNC*, i, 410ff.
[88] Mackenzie, *TML*, 248.
[89] Chadwick, *OREN*, 331f.
[90] MacCulloch, *RAC*, 222ff.

The Women's Kingdom in India

Strī-rājya, 'the women's kingdom', is often mentioned in Indian literature. The *Jaiminibhārata* speaks of Pramīlā, queen of the land of Amazons, who fought against the Pāṇḍava hero Arjuna.[94] Although Pramīlā is no doubt a mythical figure, the existence of Strī-rājyas in ancient India was not merely a flight of fancy, as it seems to be supported by works such as the *Si-yu-ki* of the seventh century Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang. According to this work, to the north of the Brahmapura coutry in the present Kumaun-Garhwal region in the Himalayas, was the Suvarṇagotra Country (Su-fa-la-na-kin-ta-lo). This was the 'Eastern Women's country' because it was ruled by a succession of women. Hiuen-Tsang says : "For ages woman has been the ruler, and so it is called 'the Kingdom of women.' The husband of the reigning woman is called king but he knows nothing about the affairs of the state."[95] This Suvarṇgotra country with its typical social system is mentioned in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*[96] and the *Vikramāṅkadeva-carita*.[97] The statement of the Chinese pilgrim seems to be supported by the account of the Nu-wang tribe of Tibet, said to have been ruled by a woman who was called Pin-chin. The people in each successive region chose a woman for their sovereign.[98] Hiuen-Tsang also mentions another Strī-rājya called by him 'Western Women's country' near Lāṅgala in the present Baluchistan region.[99] The same country seems to be located in Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* in the north-western part of Bhāratavarṣa.[100] We have references to Strī-rājya consisting of five lakhs of villages in the *Skandapurāṇa* in the *Parāśara* and in the *Samāsasaṃhitā*.[102] In Yaśodhara's *Jayamaṅgalā* commentary on the *Kāmasūtra* we have also reference to a Strī-rājya lying to the west of Vajravanta country.[103] Vātsyāyana connected Strī-rājya with the Bāhīkas with whom it had certain customs in common.[104] H. C. Chaklader thinks that in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, Strī-rājya is considered to have been lying in the extreme north-west which agrees with the evidence given in the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*.[105] Megasthenes heard of queen-rulers in the Pāṇḍya country and it is interesting to note that the said country was in the Malabar region which had always been a matriarchal area. Arrian says that Pandaia was the daughter of Heracles who entrusted her with the sovereignty of the land in which she was born. According to Polyaenus her empire comprised 365 villages and it was the rule that one village should each day bring to the treasury the royal tribute, so that the queen might always have the assistance of those men whose turn it was to pay the tribute in coercing those who for the time being were defaulters in their payments. According to Solinus the Pandaeon nation was always governed by queens.[106] In myths and legends as well as in beliefs and traditions traces of the relics of ancient tribal mother rule are frequently found. As for example, the Newars of Nepal believe that their country belongs to the Kumāri (a young girl elected from time to time and worshipped as the living form of Kālī or Durgā) so that the king has to take a fresh mandate from her every year to rule the land.[108] The *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* also refers to the women's kingdom in north-west India,[103] and this is supported by the evidence of the *Mahābhārata* which locates it to the north of the Himalayas near the regions inhabited by the Huṇas and Taṅgaṇas.[109] Strīrājya is mentioned in the *Rājataraṅgiṇī*[110] and also in the Tantric literature.[111] The *Rāmāyaṇa*[112] mentions Strī-loka, region of the women, as a country to the north-west of India.

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[91] Nutt, *SLHG*, 232.

[92] Abercromby, *HBAPGB*, i, 70.

[93] *Vita Agricolae*, xv.

[94] Ch. xxii ; Dey *GDAMI*, 194.

[95] Sircar, *CGEIL*, 66n ; cf. Watters, *YCTI*, i, 330.

[96] Ch. lv.

[97] xviii, 57.

[98] Sherring, *WT*, 338.

[99] Watters, *YCTI*, ii, 257 ; Beal, *BRWW*, ii, 277ff.

[100] xiv.22.

[101] Maheśvara/Kumārikā, xxxix. 27ff, Awasthi, *SSP*, 28, 48.

[102] Sircar, *CGEIL* 96ff.

[103] i. 249 (GOS).

[104] *KS*, ed. Tarkaratna, 385.

Vestiges of Mother-right in India

In India, particularly in her eastern and southern zones, there are various peoples who have retained to this day a primitive social organisation of matriarchal character. Many of the inhabitants of the Khasi and Jaintia hills trace their descent from an ancestress styled *ki lawbei tynrai* (the root of the clan tree). From this root spring up specialised clans called *shi-kur* and these are divided into sub-clans called *kpoh*. The next division is the *iing* or family, consisting of the grandmother, her daughters and their children. The house belongs to the women born of the family. *Long-jaid na ka kynthei* (from the women sprang the clan) is the saying of the Khasis who, when reckoning descent, count from the mother only and speak of a family of brothers or sisters, who are the great-grandchildren of one great-grandmother, the man being nobody. If he is a brother, he has to become a member of the family or clan he marries ; if a husband, he is looked upon merely as a begetter (*u shong kha*). He can take no part in the rites and ceremonies of his wife's family, and his ashes after death can find no place within the wife's family tomb. It is usual for the husband to live with his wife in his mother-in-law's house. As long as the wife lives in her mother's house, all her earnings go to her mother. Amongst the Syntengs and the peoples of Mahoshai, the husband does not go and live in his mother-in law's house ; he only visits her there. In Jawai, the husband comes to his mother-in-law's house after dark. He does not eat, smoke or even take a betel-nut there, because none of his earnings go to support this house and therefore it is not etiquette for him to take food or other refreshments there. Polygamy does not exist among the Khasis. Only daughters are entitled to the share of property which belongs to the mother. The youngest daughter generally gets the lion's share. If she dies, or in the event of changing her religion or committing an act of taboo, she is succeeded by the next youngest daughter. All property which has been acquired by a man before marriage is considered to belong to his mother. If the property has been acquired by the man after marriage, that may be inherited by the wife and the children, the youngest daughter obtaining the largest share. The Khasi and Synteng laws of inheritance are practically the same. The income from land belongs to the *kur* (clan) which is divided among the constituent *iings* (families) in which the mother is the head and the only bond of union. This holds good also in the case of the Lynngam law of inheritance.[113]

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[105] *ABORI*, vii, 144ff.

[106] Majumdar, *CAI*, 222-23, 456-58.

[107] Sircar *CGEIL*, 66.

[108] lviii. 39 ; Pargiter, *MP*, 375.

[109] iii. 51 ; xii. 4 ; Sorensen, *I*, 650.

[110] iv. 173 ; 185, 587, 666.

[111] Sircar *SP*, 96.

[112] iv. 43. 20.

Among the Garos, all property goes through the women and the males are incapable of inheriting in their own right. The husband enters the wife's family and the children belong to the wife's clan. The clans are divided, into different houses called *maharis* or 'motherhoods'. A man cannot take to wife a girl of his own *mahari*, but must select from one of the *maharis* with whom the family is allied. As with the Khasis, the father is more or less an outsider, but his sister's son (*nokram*) often stays with him to supervise his position among the kinsmen of his wife. This sister's son often marries his maternal uncle's youngest, that is inheriting, daughter and sometimes her widowed mother also. The mother appoints one of her daughters, generally the youngest, as heir (*nokna*). Other daughters have no claim on property, but are allowed to live in the family house until marriage. There is no restriction on intercourse, young women having ample scope to satisfy their mating instinct. When the *nokna* becomes widow, her daughter becomes the *nokna*, but the husband of the latter cannot get control of the property unless he marries his mother-in law. The *nokna* is bound to marry her father's sisters son, and if such a person is not found she must marry any male of her father's sister's familly.[114] Matrilocal marriage is the system of the Lalungs,[115] another tribe of the Khasi and Jaintia hills, and this holds good in the case of the Kochs, among whom father-right has of late been introduced. Hodgson[116] and Dalton[117] found among them vestiges of mother-right, especially in the cases of inheritance, property relations and marriage.

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[113] Gurdon, *K*, 62ff ; Chattopadhyay, *KKSO*.

[114] Playfair, *G*, 80ff ; Gait, *CI* (Assam), 1891, i, 299 ; Daton, *DEB*, 63-64 ; Bose, *GLI*, 86ff ; Idem in *Man* No. 54.

[115] Giat, *CI* (Assam), 1891, I, 231.

The Nayar joint family, or *tarwad*, consists of a woman and her sons and daughters, the children of those daughters and so on. The sons' children do not belong to that *tarwad* but are affiliated to the *tarwads* of their wives. The property of a *tarwad* is practically impartible and it is looked after by the *karnavan,* the mother's brother. He plays an important role, not only as the representative of the ruling mother, but also in many other respects. The *amma champaltu,* the maternal uncle's song, is sung at marriage. Children to a certain degree belong to their mother's brother, whose name occurs in theirs.[118] When a *tarwad* grows unusually big, it often splits into smaller family units called *tavazhis*. The *tavazhi,* in the same way, is constituted of a female, her children and all her descendants in the female line (*ta* is 'mother' and *vazhi* is 'line of descent'). The property of the *tarwad* is divided equally among all the *tavazhis* into which it is split up. The strength of this matrilineal joint family is mainly due to the typical form of matrilocal marriage current among them. Nayar women are entitled to keep more than one husband, and this is possible only in a matrilocal residence where husbands are occasional visitors only. Nayar marriage does not always turn out to be permanent, because the *sambandham* (the term by which the Nayar marriage is generally known) in itself, though recognised as legal, has not the binding effect of a proper marriage. It is dissoluble at will, either of the partners having the right of breaking off the relation at any moment. This instability is due to the fact that the *sambandham* implies no legal obligation of maintenance to the divorced wife. Thus the children born of *sambandham* belong to their mother's *tarwad* and inherit from the mother. The husband is a visitor to his wife's place, and the children have no tie with him. Of course, today, much of the social organisation of Nayar motherhood have suffered the disintegrating influence of modern conditions. Still it is difficult to say whether the Nayars in the near future will change over to the patrilineal family prevalent in other parts of the country.[119]

The Functionalists say that there is no necessary and inevitable correlation between matriliny and any other particular rule of inheritance, succession, residence or authority. But the above examples are sufficient to show the bankruptcy of their formulation. We have seen that the original form of mother-right is preserved to a great extent among the Khasis and other tribes of India. Among these peoples succession passes from mother to daughter, as among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona. Gradually however, the women's function is deputed to the men, either the brother as among the Iroquois, or the husband, as in the Roman monarchy. Succession thus passes from man to man, but in the *female* line, from mother's brother to sister's son, or from father-in-law to son-in-law. Where inheritance is matrilineal on account of matrilocal marriage and other factors, the mother's brother has automatically a significant part to play. There is reason to believe that, in ancient times executive and protective functions were exercised by the woman's brother, and not by husband, and that, bonds of affection between brother and sister were closer than between husband and wife.[120] The word 'brother' is in Sanskrit *bhrātṛ* which comes from the root *bhṛ*, meaning 'to support'. In the continent of America, among the Red Indians, the maternal uncle is more important than any other relative judging from the authority with which he is invested over his nephews and nieces.[121] This is true of many African tribes.[122] In Melanesia, "the closest relationship, according to the native customs, is that which exists between the sister's son and the mother's brother, because the mother who transmits kinship is not able to render the services which a man can give."[123] In the *Mahābhārata* it is stated that among the Āraṭṭas and Bāhīkas the sister's son inherits the property of his maternal uncle.[124] Among the Pulayans or Cherumans of South India, property is transmitted from mother's brother to sister's son.[125] Mother's brother has a very prominent position among the Bhondari, Bonthuk, Dandasi, Jalari, Jogi, Kadir, Maravan, Muka-dora, Parayan, Toreya, Tottiyan, Tsakala, Uppara, Balija, Banajiga, Gangadikara Okkalu, Ganiga, Golla, Halikar Okkaliga, Holeya, Idiga, Jain, Kilekyata, Komati, Koracha, Kumbara, Kumba, Madiga, Mondaru, Sadaru, Tigara and other tribes and castes of Southern India.[126] In Madhya Pradesh the same is true of the Bhunjia, Chamar, Gowari, Gond, Kamar, Mali and others.[127] Among the Halabas, the nephew gets the maternal uncle's daughter in marriage.[128] Specially important in this connexion is the survival of the custom of marrying the daughter of one's maternal uncle in some regions of South India. This custom has also been referred to in the Brahmanical law books.[129] Among the Parayans or Malas the maternal uncle is all in all in the marriage of his nephew.[130] Among the Kadirs, marriage with the maternal uncle's daughter is always preferred.[131] This custom is called *menarikam* in different parts of South India.

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[116] *JASB*, xviii (2), 707.
[117] *DEB*, 91.
[118] Thurston, *CTSI*, v, 294, 323.
[119] Mayne, *THLU*, 969, 976ff ; Panikkar, *SANL*, 264-71 ; Idem in *JRAnI*, xlviii, 291 ; Thurston, *EN*, 120 ; Buchanan, *JM*, ii, 412 ; Iyer, *CTC*, ii, 49 ; Kapadia, *MFI*, 336ff.

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[120] Briffault, *M*, i, 498-505.

[121] Morgan, *SC*, 158.

[122] Hartland, *PP*, i, 277-90.

[123] Codrington, *M*, 34.

[124] viii. 45. 13.

[125] Iyer, *CTC*, i, 111.

[126] Thurston, *CTSI*, i, 126, 230, 258 ; ii, 442, 494-97 ; iii, 18 ; v, 40, 164 ; vi. 95, 99, 103 ; vii, 178, 191, 201, 229 ; Nanjundayya and Iyer, *MTC*, ii, 110, 189 ; iii, 209, 274, 332, 364, 443, 524, 543, 593 ; iv 9, 42, 145, 183, 220, 529, 611.

[127] Russell, *TCCPI*, ii, 326ff ; iii, 71-75, 162, 326 ; iv, 167, 421.

[128] *Ibid.*, i, 145.

[129] *Baud. D.S.*, I.1. 19-26 ; cf. Manu, xi. 172-73.

[130] Thurston, *CTSI*, vi. 95, 99, 103.

[131] Iyer, *CTC*, i, 6, 9-10.

Among the Badagas the position of the woman is somewhat unusual. The women are so industrious and their services are of such value to their husbands, that a Badaga has to pay a heavy amount as dowry for his wife. It is very common for one who is in want of labourers to promise his daughter in marriage to the son or other relative of a neighbour. And these engagements being entered into, the intended bridegroom serves the father of his betrothed, just as Jacob did to Laban, as one of his own family members till the girl comes of age, when the marriage is consummated, and he becomes a partner in the general property of the family of his father-in-law. The Badaga woman can change husbands as often as she pleases by a simple system of divorce. It is not uncommon to find them changing husbands, so long as their youth and vigour tempt them to do so. Remarriage of widows is very common, and a widow may marry the brother of the deceased husband. It is said to be the etiquette among the Badagas that, when a woman's husband is away, she should be accesible to her brothers-in-law.[132]

Commenting on the inscriptions in the famous temple caves of Nasik, R. G. Bhandarkar remarked : "It appears to have been a custom in the case of the kings to apply to them an epithet expressive of their being the sons of certain mother. The great Gautamīputra was so called because he was the son of Gautamī, though his real name was Sātakarṇi. Pulumāyi was called Vāsiṣṭhīputra because he was the son of Vāsiṣṭhī. In the same manner Yajña Sātakarṇi must have been called Gautamīputra because his mother was also named Gautamī."[133] This suggests that there was once a time when the principles of mother-right had something to do with the Śātavāhanas and that even in the time of their greatness, when they had patrilineal succession, they were often named after their mother.

Al-Bīrūnī remarked that, according to the original Indian custom, the child belonged to the caste of the mother and not to that of the father.[134] It appears that he had personal experience of the common people of North Western India. In Baluchistan the belief is often met with that "while among animals, inheritance follows the father, amongst human beings it follows the mother."[135] The Chauhan Gujars call themselves Gujars, not after their male ancestor, a Chauhan Rajput, but after the female, a Gujar woman.[136] The Banias of Madhya Pradesh believe that they descended in the maternal line from a snake princess who was married to a king.[137] The Bedias or Berias of the same region follow matrilineal mode of inheritance and this also holds good in the cases of the Halabas, Kaikaris, Kurmis, Mangs, Rajjhars and others.[138] The Oraons and Santals allow their son-in-law to inherit the father-in-law's property. If he inherits, his first son will be named after the maternal grandfather and not after the paternal. Among the Mundas permanent matrilocal marriage is common, the son-in-law becomes a member of the family, and succeeds to a portion of his father-in-law's inheritance.[139]

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[132] Thurston *CTSI*, i, 77, 103ff.
[133] *TSSICO*, 340.
[134] Sachau, *AI*, i, 156.
[135] Gait, *CI*, 1911, i, 225.
[136] Risley, *CI*, 1901, i, B, 242.
[137] Russell, *TCCPI*, ii 138.
[138] *Ibid.*, ii, 224 ; iii, 193, 299, 394 ; iv, 65, 187, 408.

The Kings of Travancore followed the *alia-santāna* (from mother's brother to sister's son) system of inheritance, and the same system was followed by the Nayars. A considerable number of tribes and castes of Travancore Cochin (Kerala) are also known to have followed the system of matrilineal inheritance. Among them mention may be made of Ambattan, Ampalavasi, Chakkyar, Kavati, Krishnavakkar, Kuduni, Kurava, Kurukal, Malayarayan, Maravan Paliyan, Panan, Paravan, Pattaria, Pushpakan, Samantan, Ulladon, Variyar, Villas, Vishavan Malasar, Malayali, Parayan, Pulayan and others.[140] The Namboodiri Brahmins of Kerala who call themselves direct descendants of Paraśurāma maintain a single line of patrilineal descent and succession only so far as the eldest son is concerned. Matrilocal inheritance also prevails among the Agasa, Bedar, Bestha, Gudigara, Helava, Holeya' Kumbara, Madiga, Nattuvan and Vannan of Mysore.[141] Among other tribes and castes of Southern India following matrilineal inheritance reference may be made to the Cheruman, Gauda, Kallan, Kalasi, Koraga, Kottai Vellala, Kannuvan, Mali, Mannan, Mappila, Tiyan, Wyena and others.[142] Relics of mother-right are also found among the Bant, Billava, Chaliyan, Chetti, Gurukkal, Kudan, Kudiya, Mukkuvan, Nangudi Vellala, Pallan Tirumalpad, Unni, Velutedan and others.

Indian Marriage and Matriarchal tradition

In the *Ṛgveda*[143] we come across the important dialogue of Yama and Yamī in which the sister, in passionate words glowing with desire, draws the brother on to love. How the story of Yama and Yamī ended, we do not know. Whether or not there ever existed a lady named Yamī and whether or not she actually had incestuous relation with her brother is not very relevant for the question of the existence of sister marriage at the time of, or shortly before, the composition of the *Ṛgveda*, but the fact remains that the poet came to describe the most ardent desire of his heroine, and this seems to be a sufficient proof that such an idea was acceptble to the people of that time. In the *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*,[144] we find that Ambikā was originally the sister of Rudra, just as Hera was the sister of Zeus, and Isis the sister of Osiris. According to the *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*[145] and the *Mahāvastu*,[146] the Śākyas used to marry their sisters. The commentary on the *Suttanipāta* refers to the Śākyas who were rebuked by the Koliyans for cohabiting like dogs with their own sisters.[147] In the *Dasaratha Jātaka*, Sītā is represented as the sister as well as the wife of Rāma.[148] According to the Ceylonese *Mahāvaṃsa*, Sīhavāhu, king of Vaṅga and Rāḍha, married his sister Sīhasīvalī.[149] According to the Jain *Āvaśyaka Cūrṇi*, King Uṣabha married his own sister and king Pupphaketu allowed his son to marry his own sister. This kind of marriage was prevalent in the country of Golla.[150] Relics of sister-marriage are found in many places but it is in ancient Egypt that the system of sister marriage was developed to its fullest extent. This can only be explained in terms of matrilineal inheritance. When the property passes from mother to daughter, only two choices are left to the sons of the family. Either they can leave their own homes and reside in their wives' families, or they can live in their own homes, marrying the real heiresses, that is, their sisters.[151]

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[139] O'Malley *CI*, 1911, v (1), 315ff.

[140] Pillai, *CI*, 1931, Travancore, xxviii, 371-402 ; Iyer, *CTC*, i, 28-29, 76, 98.

[141] Nanjundayya and Iyer, *MTC*, ii, 3, 7, 108 ; iii, 149, 247, 315, 332, 433 ; iv, 10, 138, 422.

[142] Thurston, *CTSI*, ii, 66, 296 ; iii. 33, 73, 268, 424 ; iv, 119, 350, 440, 455 ; vii, 143.

[143] x. 10.

[144] iii. 59.

[145] *DN*, iii, 14 ; cf. Beal, *CBS*, 126.

[146] Jones, *M*, i, 296.

In the *Mahābhārata* it is stated that the women of the Madrakas and the Sindhu-Sauvīras had sexual freedom.[152] The same held good for the Ārattas and Bāhikas. The Utsava-Saṅketas mentioned in the Sabhā-parvan[153] also had sexual freedom. Nīlakaṇṭha writes : *Utsavasaṅketaṃ strīpuruṣayoḥ ratyarthaṃ saṅketaḥ. Na tu dāmpatya-vyavasthā. Paśūnāmiva yatrāstītyarthaḥ*. This sexual freedom, however, is not without cause. We have already referred to sexual licence current in different parts of India and elsewhere in connexion with sowing and reaping. In the *Mahābhārata* it is said that Dīrghatamas[154] established the law that every woman would have to adhere to one husband for her life. In the Pāṇḍu-Kuntī discourse,[155] we find that women formerly did not adhere to their husbands faithfully and yet they were not regarded as sinful. It was Śvetaketu, the son of Uddālaka, who introduced the patriarchal form of marriage. The legend of Gālava and Mādhavī[156] also points out to a time when the ideals of patrilocal marriage, especially the concepts of female chastity and others, were not ingrained in social life.

Draupadi's polyandrous marriage was not an isolated event in the *Mahābhārata*. It also refers to a woman named Jaṭilā belonging to the Gautama lineage, who was the wife of seven persons. Another woman called Vārkṣī was engaged in fraternal polyandry by marrying ten Pracetas brothers.[157] Polyandry may be traced to the Ṛgvedic hymn[158] which describes the marriage of the Aśvins with Sūryā. Rodasī was the common wife of the Maruts.[159] She is described as *sādhāraṇī* which in classical literature came to mean the woman common to all men. The Paraśurāma episode, according to Ehrenfels,[160] symbolises the fight of the Aryan immigrants against the polyandry of the Nayars. The polyandric desires of Reṇukā point to matriarchal characteristics of India. The murder of the mother by Paraśurāma seems to recall the destruction of ancient Indian mother-right. Polyandry is found among the Kallan of Madura, the Kaniyan and the Mannan, the Mudvar and Tottiyan peasants of Kerala as well as among the Telugu Kapu or Reddi.[161] Relics of polyandry are found among the Bagada peasants of the Nilgiri hills, the Cheruman or Pulayan, the Telugu Jogi, the Kanarese Kappilian peasants, the Khond, and the Nayadi peasants.[162] In Madhya Pradesh relics of fraternal polyandry are found among the Bhuiya, Bari, Chamar, Gowari, Karku and other tribes and castes.[163] Among the Jadams of Hoshangabad one woman can have upto ten husbands in the course of her life.[164] The Gujars of Bulandshahr were also probably a polyandrous people.[165] Some Santal groups permit sexual relations between the younger brother and his sister-in-law, apparently a relic of fraternal polyandry.[166] Survivals of polyandry among the Rajputs and the Jats are found.[167] It is specially found among the Rajputs of Kumaun near Kalsi.[168] Tibetan polyandry has been mentioned almost in every reference to that country.[169]

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[147] i, 357 ; also *Kunāla Jātaka* (No. 536), 412.

[148] Ghosh, *JM*, 178-83.

[149] vi. 36-37 ; cf. Geiger, *MGCC*, 53.

[150] ii. 81, 178.

[151] White in *JHS*, xviii, 265.

[152] Karṇa, *xl*, 24-25, 27, 34, 41 (PCR).

[153] xxvii. 16.

[154] *Ādi.*, civ (PCR).

[155] *Ādi*, cxxii (PCR).

[156] Uddyoga, cv. cxviii (PCR).

[157] *Ādi*, ccxvii (PCR).

[158] x. 85. 10 ; *AV*, xiv. 1. 10.

[159] Sāyaṇa on *ṚV*, i. 167. 4.

[160] *MRI*, 137ff.

In Lahul, polyandry is "a recognised institution and very general."[170] It is likewise general in Saraj,[171] the Simla hills and the Manaur district of Upper Sutlej.[172] Among the Kanaurs, during the marriage ceremony, the bride's right hand is held by all brothers intending to marry her.[173] Polyandry was once general in Hindukush and Chitral, says Biddulph,[174] and his view is supported by the testimony of the eleventh century Arab traveller, Al Bīrūnī.[175] In Assam, polyandry was once common among the Abhors,[176] the Miris and the Doflas,[177] but now it is extinct among them. It is also found in Bhutan[178] and Sikkim[179] as well as in the Darjeeling district.[180] "In the Ambala submontane tract from the Jamna to the Sutlej, polyandry is very extensively practised. Indeed a sister-in-law is looked upon as common property, not only by uterine brothers, but by all *bhāi*, including first cousins"......"I believe", says Sir Danzil Ibbetson, "it is the rule, not the exception, for the wife to cohabit with all the brothers. The practice is not openly recognised or admitted to the general public, but the suggestion of it is often denied with a laugh."[181] Among the Eastern Jats "there is no attempt to conceal the fact, and it is even a common thing, when women quarrel, for one to say to the other, 'you are so careless of your duties as not to admit your husband's brothers to your embraces.' It is true that Brahmanical influence prevents upon cohabitations with an elder brother's wife, but no great pains are taken to conceal it."[182] Kirkpatrick writes: "Among them it is easier for a man to get wife if he has brothers, because she cannot then remain a widow, as they say, she becomes a *sadāsohirgan*, a 'perfectly married woman."[183] Polyandry was also practised in the Powadh villages of the Karnal district in Southern Punjab.[184] Among the Gujars, "it is customary for the wife of one brother, usually the eldest, to be occasionally at the disposal of other unmarried brothers living in the same house."[185] Polyandry is also reported to have survived among the Ahirs and Lohars.[186] Muhammedan historians mention that the infidels of the Punjab practised polyandry.[187] These facts may account for the polyandry of Draupadī.[188]

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[161] Thurston, *CTSI*, iii, 73, 178, 230 ; iv, 350 ; v, 477 ; viii, 178.

[162] *Ibid.*, i, 63, 166 ; ii, 68, 494 ; iii, 215, 356 ; v, 274.

[163] Russel, *TCCPI*, ii, 224, 316, 406 ; iii, 161, 557 : iv, 142.

[164] *Ibid.*, iii, 219.

[165] *Ibid.*, iv, 345, 350.

[166] Risley, *CI*, 1901, I.B., 155.

[167] Fawcett in *JAnSB*, ii, 333.

[168] Indraji in *IA*, viii, 88.

[169] Markham, *NMGB*, 13, 123 ; Wilson, *AS*, 230ff ; Turner, *ECTL*, 349ff ; Ahmed Shah, *FYT*, 54 ; Sherring, *WTBB*, 305ff ; Cornley, *TT*, 152 ; Savage London, *IFL*, ii, 62 ; Rockhill. *LL* 230ff ; Bonvalot, *AT*, ii, 124ff ; Diack, *GKD*, iii, 14 ; Cunningham, *L*, 289.

[170] Lyall, *LRSKD*, 203.

[171] *Ibid.*, 153.

[172] Rose, *GTCP*, III, 12.

[173] *Ibid.*, II, 448.

[174] *TH*, 82.

[175] Sachau, *AI*, I, 109.

[176] Rowney, *WTI*, 158.

[177] Dalton, *DEB*, 33, 36.

[178] White, *SB*, 320.

[179] *Ibid.*

[180] Risley, *TCB*, ii, 9.

[181] *RCP*, i, 365.

The Asura form of marriage is also a relic of matrilocal marriage. In patrilocal marriages the *paṇa* or dowry is taken by the kinsmen of the bride. In matrilocal marriages the reverse is the case. Here the kinsmen of the bridegroom have to pay for the bride. The patriarchal Vedic peoples knew this form of marriage, but they did not hold it in esteem. The son-in-law in such cases was described as *vijāmātā* or disreputable.[189] In the epics we find that, when Kaikeyī, Gāndhārī and Mādrī were married, heavy bride prices were paid to their guardians. Bhīṣma, while giving bride price to Śalya for Mādrī, commented that "this custom in respect to family dignity hath the approval of the wise and the good."[190] In Jain texts we have abundant references to the Asura form of marriage.[191]

The Strī-ācāra of Bengal

In Bengal, marriage was originally matrilocal, and the patrilocal form, as we find it today, is nothing but a superfluous addition. In patrilocal marriage, as is found in the Vedic tradition, the bride has nothing to do. She is treated simply as a commodity. Her father hands her over to a man as a gift. So marriage is called *kanyā-sampradāna* in which the girl has no part to play.

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[182] Crooke, *TCNWPO*, III, 36.
[183] *IA*, III, 36
[184] Donie, *GKD*, 76
[185] Crooke, *TCNWPO*, II, 444ff.
[186] *Ibid.*, I. 58; III, 379.
[187] Elliot, *HI*, viii, 202.
[188] Though polyandry is usually a feature of a female dominated society, it is not always so. The Todas of the Nilgiri hills are polyandrous, but they are purely pastoral-patriarchal peoples. The scarcity of women, due to their custom of female infanticide, is responsible for Toda polyandry.
[189] *RV*, I, 109.2.
[190] *Mbh*. I. 113 (PCR).
[191] Jain, *LAI*, 156.

Side by side we also come across the existence of a custom called *strī-ācāra* (ritual of women) which must take place before the *kanyā-sampradāna*. Here the male persons have no part to play. The bridegroom is snatched from his kinsmen by the women of the family, taken to a fixed place called *chāndnātalā* and then anointed by them. The bride is raised up high so that in height she must surpass the bridegroom. Then the attending women ask, shouting : "Who is of greater importance, the bridegroom, or the bride (*bar baḍa nā kane baḍa*) ?" The answer is also given unanimously by another shout : "It is the bride who is of greater importance (*kane baḍa*)". Then the bride steps forward and exchanges her garland with that of the bridegroom. Here her role is positive, and the whole process is matrilocal.

When this is done, the next function of *kanyā-sampradāna* and the Vedic rites associated with it evidently become meaningless. *Because the girl is already married according to the existing custom*, the father cannot legally bestow her as a gift. Thus the custom of *kanyā-sampradāna* is nothing but a formal patriarchal recognition of a matriarchally determined affair. After marriage, when the bridegroom and the bride sit together, the women of the bride's kin come forward and say to the bridegroom : *kaḍi diye kinlām* (we purchase you in lieu of money ; here the *paṇa* or the bridegroom-price given to his father is edidently referred to), *daḍi diye bandhlām* (we tie you with a rope : the garland), *hāte dilām māku* (we give a spindle in your hand : probably the bride is indicated) *ekhan bhyā karo to bāpu* (now bray like an ass).

Thus, significantly, the *strī-ācāra* points to a time when marriage in Bengal was matrilocal and also to the fact that the increasing influence of father-right could not completely cast out the existing matriarchal practices.

Pāṇḍavas or Kaunteyas

With reference to Draupadi's polyandrous marriage the following points should also be taken into consideration[192] (I) Madrī's marriage with Pāṇḍu is an Asura form of marriage which, as we have seen above, is matrilocal. (II) The Karṇa-Śalya discourse proves that the Madrakas, along with the Āraṭṭas and Bāhīkas were matrilineal peoples among whom property was transmitted from mother's brother to sister's son. Pāṇḍu had matrimonial relations with one such people, the Madrakas, and this points to the fact that the Pāṇḍavas had matriarchal affiliations. (III) Bhīma's matrilocal marriage with Hiḍimbā in which the former had to leave his own kinsmen and reside with his wife in her place clearly exhibits the matriarchal custom which is still current in different parts of India.. (IV) Arjuna's matrimonial relation with Citrāṅgadā and his assurance to her father that the offspring of their union would belong to the royal dynasty of Maṇipura are relics of matrilineal kinship and inheritance. (V) The Pāṇḍavas liked to introduce themselves as 'sons of Kuntī' and the said expression is very frequent in the Mahābhārata, but very few cases be adduced in which Duryodhana introduced himself as 'son of Gāndhārī' or was invoked by such terms. (VI) In the Arjuna-Urvaśī episode, the former traces the origin of his dynasty to the divine damsel Urvaśī. But how Urvaśī was associated with the fore-fathers of Arjuna is not explained in the *Mahābhārata.* In almost all the cases, matrilineal tribes claim their origin from a divine ancestress. The Pāṇḍavas might thus be a matrilineal people that happened to rule over Hastināpura in a later age, and it is possible that that the court poets sang the glory of these five brothers by bringing them in relation to the old reputed Kuru family. It also appears that the writers of the Great Epic tried to rationalise the polyandry of Draupadī by inventing cock and bull stories, because in the time of the composition of the *Mahābhārata* such customs were looked down upon, owing to the influence of the patriarchal sentiments. It is not difficult to associate the Pāṇḍavas with the Pāṇḍya country of South India. We have seen that vestiges of mother-right are alive in Kerala even today.

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[192] Based upon my paper in *BWPG*, 37ff.

The Popular Influence

We have given more or less a detailed account of the vestiges of mother-right existing in different parts of India in order to show that the reality of Indian social life does not tally with the norms prescribed by the law books of Vedic patriarchal tradition. Even where father-right elements predominated, under different historical conditions, it was only the upper strata of society that followed or tried to follow the mode of life prescribed by the Brahmanical law books. In nineteenth century Bengal, for example, women belonging to the upper strata of society were not allowed to come out of the house or to be seen by any male person. But this did not hold good in the case of the vast mass of peasantry. Here women worked in the fields side by side with the males. The same was true in the case of other lower occupations.

Likewise, in the field of religion, it was the popular element that predominated. The Vedic religion had no appeal to the common men. The gods they worshipped, and worship even today were the *grāmadevatās* (village deities), mostly females. Elsewhere we have seen that the cult of the Mother Goddess was historically connected with the agricultural economy. And it was so deep-rooted in Indian mind that even in the sectarian religions like Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc., Mother Goddess had to be given a very important position. In fact, new set of justifications was needed to rationalise philosophically the role of the female principle in the sectarian monotheistic religions. Mention must be made in this connexion of the attempts of the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas like Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, Vallabha, etc., and also of the Śaiva philosophers of Kashmir, Tamil-land and Mysore. Even the basically atheistic religions like Buddhism and Jainism could not avoid this popular influence. Later Buddhism is, in fact, nothing but a disguised Tantric cult of the Mother Goddess.

How the popular feelings relating to the cult of the Mother Goddess have influenced other branches of human activities can be seen even in very simple affairs. As for example, in the Bengali versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, there is a story that Rāma, before his final fight with Rāvaṇa, worshipped the Mother Goddess seeking her active assistance in overpowering his enemy. The story is not found in the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki in which it is stated that the hero worshipped the Sun-god and not the Mother Goddess. Why then, in the Bengali version, the Sun-god is substitued by a female deity ? Its purpose was simply to give an emotional satisfaction to the peoples of the goddess cult. In regional literatures numerous such stories are found in which the success of the heroes was dependent upon the grace of the goddess.

The social basis of all these sould be traced to the principles of mother-right, the vestiges of which were nourished, not by the upper strata of society, the rich and the powerful, but by the simpler peoples belonging to the lower orders. The story of Cānd Sadāgar and Manasā clearly shows that, at least in Bengal, the upper class was reluctant to accept the Mother Goddess as an object of devotion and worship. This is substantiated also by historical evidence according to which the cult of the Mother Goddess was not popular among the upper classes before the fifteenth century of the Christian era. The upper class required active assistance of the lower in order to save their skin and property from the hands of the Muslim plunderers. The situation thus demanded at least a show of cultural identity of the two sections. Accordingly, some of the cults and rituals of the simpler peoples were adopted by the higher, but not in the original unsophisticated form. They were given aristocratic colour, as we find in the case of the worship of the goddess Durgā.

Matriarchal Origin of the Sāṅkhya Philosophy

The Sāṅkhya principle of *prakṛti*, as we hae seen above, laid the basis of the conception of an all-pervading Female Principle. Essentially the Sāṅkhya is the doctrine of the *pradhāna*, but within it has a place for the *puruṣa*, and the place is highly anomalous. *Puruṣa* here is not one, but many. We shall see in a sabsequent chapter that the Sāṅkhya conception of the material *prakṛti* as the cause of the universe has nothing to do with the conception of the immaterial *brahman*, the spiritual principle of the Vedāntists, and that by denying the Sāṅkhya conception of the purality of *puruṣa*, the preachers of the Vedānta school wanted to give a pseudo-Vedāntic colour to the original Sāṅkhya. However, the origin of the anomalous position of the multiple *puruṣa* can presumably be traced to the anomalous position of the males in a matriarchal society.

In the present form of the Sāṅkhya, as well as in the Tantras, the term *prakṛti* acquires a purely mataphysical connotation, but as we have already seen, basically it stands for the Mother Earth, the fruit-bearing soil. The Sāṅkhya preaches a law of causation, known as *parināmavāda*, according to which, the effect is a real modification of the cause ; the same thing which is explict in the effect is implicit in the cause. The cause of the material world is thus obviously nothing but matter, since *prakṛti* is the primordial matter or substance. In the Sāṅkhya, this primordial matter is represented as a Female Principle. The relation between *puruṣa* and *prakṛiti* is explained in terms of the relation between a man and a woman. *Prakṛti* charms *puruṣa* just as a woman charms a man. The activities of *prakṛti* are also conceived in terms of the emotional activities of a love-stricken damsel. *Prakṛiti* is sometime conceived as a blushing bride and sometimes as a beautiful dancing actress.[193] "Just as a dancing girl, after showing performances desists from dancing, so does *prakṛiti* desist, after exhibiting herself to *puruṣa*".

It is also really doubtful whether originally the terhm *puruṣa* denoted soul. The traditional Vedic philosophy attaches supreme importance to the doctrine of *puruṣa*. In the *Rgveda*,[194] *puruṣa* is nothing but the male principle, but in the long evolution of the Vedic philosophy, the conception of *puruṣa* had to undergo significant changes.[195] Basically the cocept of *puruṣa* denotes the man, and this concept of *puruṣa* as a human being with its peculiar bodily structure is not at all unknown in the Vedic texts.[196] Referring to the concept of *puruṣa*, as found in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature, Belvalkar and Ranade remark : "*Puruṣa* originally denoted the human being with its peculiar bodily structure and not any inner or spiritual entity indwelling therein".[197] The identification of *puruṣa* with soul was made in later times, and this happened due to the influence of the Vedānta. Originally the term thus denoted the male principle. In the Tantras, in which also occur the concepts of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, the former denotes Śiva. The Sāṅkhya, as we have already remarked, itself identifies *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* with the male and female principles, man and woman. "As the birth of a child proceeds from the union of male and female, so the production of creation results from the union of *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*".[198]

But the same Sāṅkhya holds that *puruṣa* is subordinate, inactive and nothing but a passive spectator. *Prakṛti* is the chief principle. This has given rise to great confusion. Ancient as well modern writers have been baffled in their attempts to rationalise the real role of the *puruṣa* in the Sāṅkhya system. If creation is made possible by the union of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, how is it that the role of *puruṣa* is so insignificant ? Or, if *puruṣa* is so insignificant and indifferent, how is it that he takes so important a part in the affair of creation ? This contradiction was taken into account by Śaṅkara who remarked : *kathañcodāsīnaḥ puruṣaḥ pradhānaṃ pravartayet* ? Garbe writes : "What place, however, in a system which holds such views is to be found for the *puruṣa* ? Strangely enough, former scholars who made exhaustive investigations into the Sāṅkhya system did not succeed in answering the question. They regard the *puruṣa* in this system as entirely superfluous, and hold that its founder would have shown himself much more logical if he had altogether eliminated it."[199]

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[193] *Śaṅkhyasūtra*, iii, 68.

[194] *RV*, x, 90.

[195] Chāndogya, iv, 15, 5 ; v, 10, 2 ; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, ii, 5, 14-15.

[196] *Śvetāśvatara*, iv, 5.

[197] *HIP*, ii 428.

[198] *Kārika*, xxi.

The contradiction cannot be explained except by postulating a matriarchal origin for the system. In a matriarchal society there is always a problem regarding the position of the male. Here the mother is the head and the only bond of union of the family. The father has no kinship with his children, who belong to their mother's clan. As a husband the man is a stranger to his wife's people, who refer to him curtly as a begetter. The role of husband in a matriarchal society perhaps finds its expression in the Sāṅkhya philosophy. The early Sāṅkhya philosophers must have thought that just as a child is born as a result of union of the male and the female, so also the universe is a result of the union of the *puruṣa* and the *prakṛti*. Just as the child in a matriarchal society has no real kinsphip with the father, so also the universe, in spite of being real, has no real relationship with the *puruṣa*. In a matriarchal system, a father has something to do in the matter of procreation but in the the family he is insignificant and a passive spectator, exactly like the *puruṣa* of the Sāṅkhya.

The root of the Sāṅkhya philosophy is not to be found in the Vedas. It must be sought elsewhere, obviously in the non-Vedic matriarchal tradition of India. We shall later see that the conception of a material *prakṛti* which developed in the early agricultural matriarchates of India, evolved from the conception of a material Earth Mother who is supposed to represent the forces that stimulate the generative powers of nature. Magical fertility rites, originally performed by women to ensure the process of nature, were inevitably associated with such a conception of a material Earth Mother. These rites, surviving through the ages in popular beliefs and customs, were conserved and crystallized in the Tantras, while the more rational speculations centering round the conception of a material Earth Mother later developed into a distinct metaphysical form, the Sāṅkhya system.

Mother-right and the Tantra

The ritualistic background of the philosophical Sāṅkhya, as it appears, was nothing but a form of primitive Tantricism. We have seen that the philosophical

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[199] *ERE*, xi, 191.

Sāṅkhya is essentially the the doctrine of *pradhāna* or *prakṛti* and that the anomalous status of the *puruṣa* in the Sāṅkhya system is certainly a reflection of the anomalous position of the male in a matriarchal society. That the Sāṅkhya was originally regarded as a form of *tantra* is proved by the fact that Śaṅkara refers to it as Kapilasya tantra, the tantra of Kapila.[200] Īśvarakṛṣṇa mentions in his *Sāṅkhyakārikā* a treatise called *Saṣṭhītantra* as one of his source books, while Guṇaratna mentions another extinct text on the Sāṅkhya called *Ātreyatantra*. The author of the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* himself uses term *tantra* to connote the Sāṅkhya, and in view of the fact that no ancient exponent of any school of Indian Philosophy is known to have used the word *tantra* to refer to his own system, it may be suggested that the term used by Īśvarakṛṣṇa and Śaṅkara is not without any historical significance. The philosophical Sāṅkhya, as we shall see in the present section, is nothing but a specialised development of a primitive form of Tantricism. There is every reason to believe that Tantricism is much older than the Tantric texts themselves and that, in spite of the existence of metaphysical speculations in the Tantras, originally Tantricism was only concerned with ritualism, since the expression *ācāra*, added to the *dakṣiṇa* and *vāma* (*vāmā*), can only be explained in terms of ritual practices.

We have sought to prove in the foregoing section that the Sāṅkhya philosophy had a matriarchal background. There is also something in Tantricism which helps us to hold that it was originally the exclusive affair of woman, and that it was invariably associated with the principles of mother-right. A main feature of the *tantras* "is the higher standard to which they have raised womanhood. Śakti proclaims that, in one sense, she is manifested more in women than in men. When women are approached with reverence and awe, purity and devotion, they raise men to the standard of gods."[202] In the *Devībhāgavata*, we come across such passages in which women, as manifestation of the great world cause, are entitled to respect and even to veneration : Whoever offends them incurs the wrath of *prakṛti*, mother of all, whilst he who propitiates them offers worship of *prakṛti* herself.[203] Herein lies the significance of Kumārī-pūjā or virgin worship to which the Tantras attach special importance.[204] "Wherever gynaecocracy meets us," says Bachofen, "the mystery of religion is bound up with it and lends to motherhood an incorporation of some divinity."[205] Among the followers of the *tantra* school, female shamanesses called *bhairavīs* and *yoginīs* still occupy an important place. The seven *padmas* or lotuses on the *susumnā*-cord are nothing but seven seats of femininity inherent in every human being, and the *śaktis* like Kulakuṇḍalinī, Vāruṇī, Lākinī, etc., residing in the lotuses are also conceived as female. Even in the so-called Vaiṣṇava *Sahajiyā* literature, the *Kulakuṇḍalinī-śakti* is conceived as Rādhā, that is, the female principle of the Vaiṣṇavas. "In the Caryā songs we find frequent references to this female force variously called as the Caṇḍālī, Dombī, Śavarī, Yoginī, Nairāmaṇī, Sahajasundarī, etc., and we also find frequent mention of the union of the yogin with this personified female deity."[206]

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[200] On *Brahmasūtra*, ii, 1.1. [201] *Kārikā*, 70. [202] Pillai, *CI*, Travancore, 1931, xxviii, 349.
[203] ix, i, 137-45. [204] *Tantrasāra*, 642ff ; *Devībhāgavata*, iii, 26-27. [205] *M*, xv.

It is also interesting to note that, in the *tantras,* women are given the right of initiating persons in matters of religious and spiritual practices. The high position of women in the Tantras, goes against the existing Brahmanical notion that a woman is never fit for independence : "Her father protects her in childhood, husband in youth and son in old age……She has no business with the Vedas, thus the law is fully settled."[207] The conception of *dakṣiṇācāra* as opposed to *vāmācāra* seems to be a later development, and it is possible that the first word in the expression *vāmācara* is not *vāma* or left but *vāmā*, woman. Actually there is no rightism or leftism in the *tantras.*[208] Thus *vāmācāra* may be a woman's rite, a female ritual. Though in modern times, *tantra* is male-dominated, there is reason to believe that once it belonged to the females. R. G. Bhandarkar writes : "The ambition of every pious follower of the system is to become identical with Tripurasundarī, and one of his religious exercises is to habituate himself to think that god is a woman. Thus the followers of the Śakti school justify their appellation by the belief that god is a woman and it ought to be the aim of all to become a woman."[209] Similarly, speaking of the Sahajiyās, M. M. Bose writes : "The Sahajiyās also believe that at a certain stage of spiritual culture the man should transform himself into a woman, and remember that he cannot have experience of true love so long as he cannot realise the nature of the woman in him."[210] In a Caryā song we find that the Yogin Kanha became effeminate.[211] The *Ācārabheda-tantra* presceribes that the *Parā Śakti* should be worshipped only by becoming a woman.[212]

Pañcatattvaṃ khapuṣpañca pūjayet kulayoṣitam |
Vāmācāro bhabettatra vāmā bhūtvā yajet parām ||

It seems therefore, that the Tantric mode of worship was originally followed by women. It appears from a legend that Brahman, Viṣṇu and Śiva were transformed into women before they were allowed to see the Devī in her highest form.[213] These legends of sex transformation may have some bearing on the widespread custom according to which it is compulsory for the priest to use female robes during his priestly functions. Such customs must be explained in terms of mother-right. Among the tribes of California, the male shamans used to dress themselves in female robes.[214] Effeminate sorcerers or priests of this sort were found among the Sea-Dyaks of Borneo, the Bugis of South Celebes, the Potagonians of South America, thc Aleutians and many other Indian tribes of North America, the Congolese, the inhabitantse of Madagascar and in many other countries of the world. Frazer thinks that these priests might have succeeded to the priestesses when the change from mother-kin to father-kin took place and that we come across these effeminate priests in regions where the system of mother-right either actually prevailed or had at least left its traces in tradition and custom.[215]

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[206] Dasgupta, *ORC*, 116.
[207] Manu, ix, 3 ; ix, 18.
[208] *Vāmakeśvara*, li ; Vasu, *VK*, vii, 513.
[209] *CW*, iv, 208.
[210] *PCSCB*, 42 ; *SS*, 52.
[211] Dasgupta, *ORC*, 105, 116-17.
[212] *VK*, vii, 512.
[213] *Devi Bh.*, iii, 4.6-10.
[214] Powers, *TC*, 152, 270.

Referring to the Lāmāvarga or the practices of the Lāmās, P. C. Bagchi says that the Lāmās originally constituted a mystic group of female Tantric adepts. The same may be held good in the cases of the Lākinīs, Ḍākinīs and Śākinīs.[216] If the observations of Bagchi are correct, we may hold that in more ancient times these Lāmās, like other goddesses of the Tantric pantheon, were originally female Tantric adepts who later came to be deified. Mother-right still prevails in some parts of Tibet,[217] and, in view of this fact, we may assume that, in olden times, female priests exercised a great influence in the social and religious life of that country. It was among them that the secret conclaves of Lamaism developed. The followers of the special doctrine of the Lāmās, says the *Jayadrathayāmala*, should practise self-control in the company of women ; according to the special doctrine of the Śākinīs, the adept should have his meals in the company of the Yoginīs.[218] These customs confirm that the Tantric esoteric practices belonged to the females before they were taken up by the males. The *Guhyasamāja*, the oldest extant Buddhist *tantra*, while describing the different ceremonies in connexion with initiation mentions *prajñābhiṣeka* or initiation of the disciple with Prajñā or Śakti.[219] The preceptor takes the hand of Vidyā or Śakti, a beautiful woman, and placing it on the hand of the disciple says that, as Buddhahood is impossible of attainment by any other means, this Vidyā should be accepted and never abandoned in life. The Vidyās were therefore women of flesh and blood. Later on they were deified. The *Sammoha-tantra* gives a list of the Vidyās whose worship was current in different parts of India. Some of them are well known names of the Buddhist and Brahmanical goddesses.[220] But if the original conception of Vidyā, as enumerated in the *Guhyasamāja*, be understood it is possible to believe that originally at least some of them were female human beings, later raised to the standard of divinity.

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[215] *AAO*, 428ff.

[216] *ST*, 45ff.

[217] Cunningham, *L*, 306 ; Briffault, *M*, i, 647-48.

[218] Bagchi, *ST*, 49.

[219] *Guhyasamāja*, 161.

[220] Bagchi, *ST*, 100-1.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TWO CURRENTS

The existence of a non-Vedic stream of thought is recognised in Indian tradition, and the source of this stream may be explored in the ruins of Harappa and Mohenjodaro.[1] In 1926, R. P. Chanda pointed out that the Indra-worshipping Aryans had really fought against the civilized inhabitants of India ; and in their oral traditions they kept the memory of those wars alive. In many passages of the *Ṛgveda* occurs the word *Puraḥ* or *Pur* signifying a rampart or a fort or a stronghold. Sometimes these strongholds are referred to metaphorically as made of metal (*āyasī*). In a verse we have reference to such a fort with a hundred walls (*śatabhūji*). It is interesting to note that references to such castles are generally found in the *Ṛgveda* in relation to the wars with the non-Vedic peoples. Indra shattered ninety such forts for his protege Divodāsa and these forts were probably made of stone (*aśmanmayī*). According to Chanda, there is no reason to believe that the forts were purely mythical or were merely places of refuge against attack. The peoples shot and plundered by the Ṛgvedic Aryans were no other than the Paṇis who were a developed people, proficient in trade and commerce. Since commercial activities had a significant role in the Harappan economy, Chanda concludes that the Paṇis were representatives of the later stage of Harappa culture and that they were encountered by the invading Aryans. The invasions that took place in the Indus valley in the second millenium B.C. were strikingly similar to those occuring in the Aegean and in Western Asia. The pre-Vedic civilization of India could not stand against the Aryan invasion.[2]

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[1] The urban character of the pre-Vedic Harappa civilization, as we have already stated, must have evolved through an agricultural economy, while the Ṛgvedic peoples were purely pastoral tribes (See ch. i, fn. 25). Therefore the basic difference between the Vedic and the non-Vedic streams of Indian thought is not merely a difference of religious sentiments, as is observed by some scholars (cf. Keith, *RPV*, 187). The real cause of difference is rather to be sought on social and economic grounds. Cattle-rearing being a masculine pursuit, all the pastoral societies were necessarily patriarchal, and this accounts for the wide influence of father-right on the society and religion of the Vedic peoples (cf. Childe *MMH*, 81).

[2] IVPP, 3ff ; also *SPCIV* published in 1929. In fact Chanda's hypothesis formed the basis of the well known theory that the barbarians who destroyed the Harappa civilization were no other than the Vedic Aryans. Between 1928 and 1934 Vats excavated at Harappa a cemetery known as the Cemetery H (*EH*, 203ff). In 1934, on the basis of its post-Harappan character, Childe came to the conclusion that the peoples of the Cemetery H might have been 'Aryans' (*NLMAE*, 223). In 1936, on an analogy between the urn-burials described in the Vedic *Gṛhyasūtras* and the pot-burials of the Cemetery H, Datta identified them with the Aryans

The Asuras

Indra's fight with the non-Vedic inhabitants of India is described in many passages of the *Ṛgveda.* As a favour to Abhāvartī, son of Cayamāna, he killed the sons of Varaśikha ; he also killed the descendants of Vṛcīvan in a place situated to the east of Hariyupīyā.[3] Indra is frequently styled Asuraghṇa, the slayer of the Asuras.[4] Varaśikha, whose sons were killed by Indra, was also an Asura according to Sāyana, and here the term Asura was evidently applied to denote the non-Aryans. In spite of various theories regarding the identification of the Asuras,[5] it is possible that originally the word denoted the non-Vedic peoples of India. "Asuras, Daityas, Dānavas and Nāgas denoted different cultures in various stages of civilization ranging from the rude, aboriginal, uncivilized tribes to the semi-civilized races, offering strong resistance to the spread of Aryan Culture. There appears to have been three stages in the description of the hostile tribes of *asuras*, *dānavas*, *daityas* and *rākṣasas* in Puranic accounts. Originally these denoted human beings, but as they were generally the enemies of the Aryans, these names came to mean alien and hated, hostile or savage men. Later on these names became terms of opprobrium and abuse which led to the attribution of evil characters to these peoples...Finally these terms came to be associated with demoniac beings and were used synonymously with demons.[6] But there is

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(*MI*, 1936, 223-307). Vats also came to a similar conclusion in 1940 (*EH*, 207-210). In 1947, not only was Childe's suggestion of the Cemetery H people being Aryans accepted by Wheeler but they also were held reponsible for the destruction of the Harappan civilization. To substantiate the invasion-theory by literary evidence Wheeler depended especially on Chanda's researches and suggested that the fortification wall of the Harappan mound AB represented the pre-Vedic stronghold of India. In addition he took into account the evidence of the scattered skeletons of men, women and children found in the upper level of Mohenjodaro which, he thougat, implied a Massacre, a likely enough phenomenon in case of a hostile Aryan attack (*AI*, iii, 58-130). In 1950, the theory of Wheeler was broadly accepted by Piggott (*PI*, 261-63). The possibility of the Cemetery H people being Aryans and the destroyers of the Harappan civilization has recently been doubted (Lal in *AI*, ix, 88). For the recent theories about the end of the Indus civilization see Chakrabarti in *ISPP*, ix, 343ff, and also my introduction to the new edition of Chanda's *IAR*.

[3] vi. 27. 5. In the war which probably took place between the Aryans and the pre-Aryans, the descendants of Vṛcīvan were totally annihilated by the former because in subsequent literary tradition we never come across reference to them See Kosambi, *ISIH*, 68 ; for Hariupiya see Wheeler, *IC*, 18.

[4] cf. *RV*, vi.22.4.

[5] Dasgupta, *HIP*, iii, 528ff., Ghose in *IC*, vii, 339 ; Idem in *VA*, 218ff. *ERE*, ii, 157 ; etc,

[6] *VA*, 313.

reason to believe, on the basis of literary evidence, that the Asuras, though they belonged to a non-Vedic stock, were not uncivilized aboriginals. They were also regarded as the children of Brahman, and in Vedic literature, as well as in the Purāṇas, we come across a number of Asura kings famous for their valour and wisdom. Whether originally they came from Sumer (S. N. Dasgupta), or from Assyria (Banerji-Sastri, Bhandarkar and others) or from ancient Iran (B.K. Ghosh), is not very relevant to the question we are discussing at present, but the fact remains that, in spite of the possibility of their foreign racial affinity, they formed an essential part in the pre-Vedic and non-Vedic population of India and offered strong resistance to the spread of Vedic culture. It is not also impossible, as Chattopadhyaya argues, that the pre-Vedic civilization of Harappa was an Asura Civilization.[7] In view of the fact that the term *asuraghṇa*, the killer of the Asuras, is frequently attributed to Indra in the Vedas, a relation between the peoples of the Harappa Culture and the Asuras may be established. We shall see later that the matriarchal Sāṅkhya system was non-Vedic in character and that the said system, in all probability, had its origin in the Pre-Vedic Harappa Culture. If the Asuras were non-Vedic peoples of India, it is but natural that the Sāṅkhya philosophy was in some way connected with the philosophy of the Asuras. As is well known, Kapila is said to have been the founder of the Sāṅkhya system and it is said that he imparted his knowledge first of all to Āsuri.[8] The name Āsuri is very significant since it is derived from the word *Asura*, and the suffix *ṣṇi* is certainly added to the word in the sense of *apatya* or progeny. In another ancient text Kapila himself is described as an *Asura*.[9] A typical form of matrilocal marriage is known as *Asura* marriage, and the fact that this form of marriage was vehemently condemned by the law-makers, naturally gives rise to the supposition that this particular form of marriage originated among those peoples who were not 'Aryans'.

But can these peoples be identified wi the non-Vedic peoples belonging to the Harappa Culture ? A clue of the answer may be derived from the *Mahābhārata*. Mādrī, sister of the Madraka king Śalya, was married and a heavy bride-price paid to her guardian,[10] and that was undoubtedly a genuine form of Asura marriage. We have seen that the Madrakas, Āraṭṭas and Bāhīkas, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, were matrilineal peoples. Amongst these peoples property was transmitted from mother's brother to sister's son.[11] "There where the forests of *Pilus* stand, and those five rivers flow, viz. the Śatadru, the Vipāśā, the Irāvatī, the Candrabhāgā and the Vitastā and which have the Sindhu for their sixth, there in those regions removed from the Himavat, are the countries called by the name of the Āraṭṭas. Those regions are without virtue or religion. No one should go thither. The gods, the *pitṛs* and the Brāhmaṇas, never accept gifts from those that are fallen, or those that are begotten by Śūdras on the girls of other castes, or *the Bāhīkas who never perform sacrifices and are exceedingly irreligious.* There, where the five rivers flow just after issuing from the mountains, there among the Āraṭṭa-Bāhīkas, no respectable person should dwell even for two days. The people residing there are called the Bāhīkas……They are without the Veda and without knowledge, without sacrifice and without the power to assist on other's sacrifices……*The Prasthalas, the Madras, the Gandhāras, the Āraṭṭas, those called Khasas, the Basātis, the Sindhus and the Sauvīras are almost as blamable in the practices.*"[12] It is not impossible to establish a relation between these peoples and the descendants of the pre-Vedic population of the Harappan empire.[13] In fact numerous passages can be quoted from the epic, Puranic and classical Sanskrit literature to prove that Punjab (Pañcanada), the land of the five rivers, was in ancient times called the Bāhīka country.[14]

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[7] *L*, 57ff.

[8] *Kārikā*, 70.

[9] *SBE*, xiv, 260.

[10] *Mbh*., Ādi, cxiii.

[11] Karṇa, xlv, 13-16.

The Vṛtra Myth

Why did the Indus civilization come to an abrupt end ? The terminal date of the Harappan civilization has now been fixed at 1750 B.C. This date certainly goes against the theory that the Harappans in their decadence, in the sixteenth or fifteenth century B.C., fell before the advancing Aryans. So the recent tendency is to interpret the end not in terms of an Aryan invasion but in terms of some natural phenomena like flood, etc. Even if we assume that flood had something to do with the destruction of Mohenjodaro, it is not yet known what brought about the end of the Harappan settlements in Punjab and in other places.

Circumstantial evidence still indicates that there was a massacre in the last days of Mohenjodaro. Men, women and children were killed in the streets and houses, and were left lying there or crudely covered without last rites. The last reconstruction of the Harappan cities exhibits every sign of decadence. Old bricks were re-used for building small houses on the sites formerly occupied by the spacious mansions of the rich peoples. The civic authority could no longer enforce the building regulations so strictly observed in more prosperous days so that dwellings encroached upon the streets.[15] But who were the invaders ?

Let us forget everything about the Vedic Aryans and suppose that they had nothing to do with the destruction of the Harappa civilization. Still the fact remains that the strongholds of the Harappan civilization were wrecked and plundered and there was a mass-slaughter. In other words, an invasion took place, but we do not know who were the invaders. They might belong to different groups of people living in the adjacent regions of the Harappan empire. It may also be supposed that they were hostile groups living within the range of the Harappan empire and that, in its disintegrating phase, exploiting the weakness of the central authority, they destroyed everything. It should be remembered in this connexion that the Harappan civilization was a class society and that there was a sharp distinction between the privileged class and the oppressed ; and so they could not stand united against invading peoples.

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[12] Karṇa, xliv, 31-46 (PCR).

[13] See Shambavanekar in *IHQ*, xii, 477-88.

[14] Sircar, *GAMI*, 185.

[15] Wheeler, *IC*, 91ff ; Childe, *NLMAE*, 187.

If the economic foundation of the Harappa culture could remain intact, then despite military defeats it could stand. The Harappans were not only defeated in the war but also the backbone of their mode of production was shattered. As we have seen above, a flourishing agricultural hinterland was the economic foundation of the Harappan empire. The pre-Aryan agriculturists of north-western India are known to have dominated the river system. Traces of an extensive irrigation system, the backbone of an agricultural economy, are found in various parts of the Harappan empire.[16] There are some interesting passages in the *Ṛgveda* which show that the Ṛgvedic peoples destroyed some cities and also some dams and barrages indispensable for agriculture, and by doing so they knocked down the basic foundation of the economy of a civilized people. Indra is looked upon as the liberator of waters. Accompanied by the Maruts he attacked and smashed Vṛtra who encompassed the waters. A barrage or dam naturaly encompasses water, and in view of this it may be suggested that Vṛtra originally symbolized the reservoirs of a developed agricultural civilization. According to the Ṛgvedic descriptions, Indra pierced the mountains and released the pent-up waters, like imprisoned cows.[17] The nineteenth century scholars looked upon Vṛtra as a demon of drought, confining the waters within the clouds. But this explanation seems to be unsatisfactory since thunderstorms or rains are hardly mentioned in the Indra-Vṛtra myth and clouds play quite a minor part in it. As the waters realeased by Indra are described as running like a horse in a race, rain-water cannot be meant ; it does not flow horizontally.[18] But if a dam or barrage is smashed, the liberated waters could evoke horses in a race.

We do not mean to say that the Ṛgvedic peoples were the invaders, but its probablity cannot be ruled out. "If we reject the identification of the fortified citadels of the Harappans with those which the Vedic Aryans destroyed, we have to assume that, in the short interval which can, at the most, have intervened between the end of the Indus civilization and the first Aryan invasions, an unidentified but formidable civilization arose in the same region and presented an extensive fortified front to the invaders. It seems better, as the evidence stands, to accept the identification and suppose that the

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[16] *Ibid.*, 7 ; cf. Kosambi, *ISIH*, 64-65.

[17] See especially *RV*, i, 32. Numerous are such passages,

[18] Apte in *VA*, 375.

Harappans of the Indus Valley in their decadence, in or about the seventeenth century B.C. fell before the advacing Aryans."[19] In the subsequent sections we shall be able to throw more light on this problem on the basis of further literary evidence.

Goddesses in the Vedas

To a critical student of Indian religion and philosophy it is clear that many of the basic features of Hinduism are not traceable to the Vedic source at all. They come into view not in the *Ṛgveda*, which represents the more or less pure Indo-Aryan tradition, but either in the later Vedas or in the still later Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads and Epics, when the Vedic Aryans had long since amalgamated with the other races and absorbed some measure of their culture and teachings. Whence these various elements were derived and when they found their way into the fabric of the national religion has never yet been satisfactorily explained. It is only now, after the discovery of the Indus Civilization, that we can safely conclude that the pre-Aryans were superior to the Vedic Aryans in all that concerned material culture and that the peoples who contributed so much to the cultural and material sides, contributed also to some of the essential metaphysical and theological ideas so intimately associated with Hindu religion.[20] Religion gives the most convincing illustration of the explicitly non-Vedic character of the Indus civilization. The religious concepts suggested by the material remains of Harappa and Mohenjodaro are familiar to modern and post-Vedic Hinduism. But they are conspicuously absent in the *Ṛgveda*, while scenes illustrative of the hymns of the latter may be sought in vain in the Indus period. As Childe rightly observes, "For the above reasons alone the Indus civilization may be regarded as non-Aryan and pre-Aryan. In fact it provides a documentary illustration of the sources, long inferred on comparative grounds of those 'accretions' which distinguish modern Brahmanism from the religion and ritual illustrated in the Vedas."[21]

Goddesses occupy a subordinate position in Vedic religion. As wives of the great gods they play a still more insignificant part. They are mere shadowy reflections of the gods, but with little independent power.[22] It is also interesting to note that even the so-called important goddesses like Aditi and Uṣas have no significance in the subsequent religious history of India. We do not find in the early stratum of the Vedic literature the names of such Puranic goddesses as Durgā, Kālī, Ambikā, Umā and others. It is only in the later Vedic literature that we find stray mention of these deities.[23] As there is no reference to these goddesses in the *Ṛgveda*, we may presume that they were originally non-Vedic deities later adopted by the Vedic Aryans. The different names of the Mother Goddess appear to have originally indicated different tribal deities, who were afterwards identified with the wife or Śiva Paśupati, the pre-Aryan god, known to have been worshipped by the Mohenjodaro peoples.

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[19] Wheeler, *IC*, 1968 ed., 132.

[20] Marshall, *MIC*, i, 78.

[21] *NLMAE*, 185.

[22] Indrāṇī found in *RV*, i.22.12 ; ii.32.8 ; x.86.11-12 ; *Śat. Br.* xiv.2.1.8. Prāsahā, a wife of Indra : *Ait. Br.*, ii. 22. Agnāyī, Varurānī, Aśvinī and Rodasī : *Nirukta*, ix,33 ; xi.50 ; xii.46 ; *ṚV*, i.22.12 ; ii.32.8 ; v.46,8 ; vi.50.51 ; vi.66.6 ; vii.34.22. Araṇyānī : *RV*, x.146 ; *Nirukta*, ix.29, 30. Rākā : *RV*, ii.32.4-8 ; v.42.12. Sinīvālī : *RV*, ii.32.6 ; x.184.2. Guṇgu or Kuhū : *RV* ii.32.8. Lakṣmī and Śrī : *RV*. x.71.2 ; *AV*, vii.115.1 ; *Vāj, Sam.* xxxi.22 ; *Śat. Br.*, vi.4.3.1. Śraddhā : *RV*, x.151 ; *Nirukta*, ix.1 ; *Vāj. Sam.*, xix.30 ; 77 ; *Taitt. Br.*, iii.12.3.1 ; *Śat. Br.*, xii,7.3.11. Diti : *RV*, v.62.8 ; vii.15.12 ; *AV*, vii.7.1 ; xv.6.7 ; xv.18.4 ; *Vāj. Sam.*, xviii.22. Oṣadhi : *RV*,

Female deities found in the Vedic literature are therefore obscure minor divinities who can hardly be accepted as the prototypes of the Devī of the Śāktas. The only exception is Uṣā. She is invoked in 20 separate hymns, and her name is mentioned more than 300 times in the *Ṛgveda*.[25] But, in spite of these numerous references to Uṣā, as we find in the *Ṛgveda*, it is interesting to note that she is insignificant in the later Vedic literature ; she does not even figure in the subsequent religious history of India, and is practically absent in the Epics and the Purāṇas. And what was the real attitude of the Ṛgvdic Aryans towards this goddess ? Was it of reverence or awe ? Certainly not. In *Ṛgveda*, IV, 30,8-11, the poet does not hesitate to admire the heroism of Indra in overcoming Uṣā : "This, Indra, was a deed of might and manliness which thou didst achieve that thou didst smite the daughter of the sky (Uṣā), a woman who was bent on evil. Thou Indra, the great (god) didst crush Uṣas, though the daughter of the sky, who was exalting herself. Uṣas fled away in terror from her shattered car, when the vigorous (Indra) had crushed it. This chariot of her lies broken and dissolved, while she herself has fled afar off."[26]

What is the cause of Indra's hostile attitude towards Uṣā ? D. D. Koṣambi explains this in terms of the struggles between Vedic and non-Vedic peoples. He points

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x.1.4 ; x.97 ; x.145. Āpas : *RV*, vi.50.7 ; Ilā and Bhāratī : *RV*, vii.2.8 ; ix.58.8. Apyā Yoṣā ; *RV*, x:10.4 ; x.11.2. Saraṇyu : *RV*, x.17.2. Saramā : *RV*, x,108 ; Gandharvī : *RV*, x,11.2. Alakṣmī : *RV*, x.155. Asunīti : *RV*, x.59.56. Niṣtigṛ : *RV*, x.101.22. Sūryā : *RV*, i.119.5 ; iv.43.6 ; vii.63.3; x.85. A wife of Bhava is found in *Hir. G.S.*, ii.3.8, while Rudrāṇī Bhavānī and Sarvānī are mentioned in *Pār. G.S.*, iii.9,

[23] Ambikā, sister of Rudra : *Vāj.Sam.*, iii.57 ; *Taitt Br.*, i. 6. 10, 4-5. Also as Rudra's spouse : *Taitt. Ār.*, x.18 ; invoked as Vairocanī, Durgī, Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī ; *ibid.*, x.1,7 ; Vāk as a more concrete figure : *Śat. Br.*, iii.2.4,1 ; also as a goddess of learning : *ibid.*, vii.5.2.52. Vāk as the wife of Indra : *Taitt. Br.*, ii.8.8.4. Her identification with Sarasvatī : *Kāṭh. Sam.*, xii.5 ; xxvii.1. Vāk as the consort of Prajāpati : *Pañc. Br.*, xx.14.2. Conception of Nirṭi : *Śat. Br.*, vii.2.7 ; vii.2.11 ; *Ait. Br.*, iv.17. Umā : *Kena Up.*, iv.1. Kālī : *Muṇḍ. Up.*, i.2.4. Bhadrakālī and Śrī *Śān. G.S.*, ii.15.4.

[24] *RV*, i.48 ; i.49 ; i.113 ; i.123 ; i.124 ; iii.61 ; iv.51 ; iv.52 ; v.79 ; v.80 ; vi.64-65 ; vii.75-81; viii.172.

[25] Macdonell, *VM*, 127.

[26] Muir's Tr.

out that a careful study of the Indra-Uṣā legend is suggestive of the fact that the Vedic Aryans held a hostile attitude towards Uṣā, the Mother Goddess of the pre-Vedic peoples.[27] The same hymn which describes Indra's rape Uṣā also describes his brilliant success against the non-Vedic chiefs[28] : "Thou has spread abroad upon the earth, by the contrivance, the swollen *sindhu* when arrested (on its course). By valour thou hast carried off the wealth of Ṣuṣṇa, when thou hadst demolished his cities. Thou hast slain the slave Sambara, the son of Kulitara, hurling him from off the huge mountain. Thou hast slain the five hundreds and thousands (of the followers) of the slave Varcin (surrounding) him like the fallies (round the spokes of a wheel)......Indra has overturned a hundred stone-built cities for Divodās, the donor of oblations. He put to sleep by delusion, with his destructive (weapons) thirty thousand of the servile (races), for the sake of Dabhīti. Slayer of Vṛtra, thou art the same (to all thy worshippers), the lord of cattle, who castest down all these (thine enemies)."[29] Indra has overturned a hundred stone-built cities. As we have seen above, there are at least some grounds to identify these cities and forts with the sites of the Harappa culture.

Since the story of the rape of Uṣā by Indra is repeated in many passages of the *Ṛgveda*,[30] we cannot call it simply an isolated event without any significance. What is strikingly significant is that the same hymn which describes the rape of Uṣā also describes Indra's success in plundering the cities of Ṣuṣṇa, defeating the Dāsa Kaulitara, slaying five thousand followers of the Dāsa Varcin, making a gift of hundred stone-built cities to Divodās and slaying thirty thousand Dāsas for the sake of Dabhīti. Kosambi argues that the combination of the two episodes in a single hymn was not accidental and that the Indra-Uṣā episode should therefore be taken into account in view of Aryan non-Aryan relations. The *Ṛgveda* refers to Uṣā as *mātā devānāṃ aditer anīkam*, mother of the gods and rival of Aditi, as Sāyana interprets it.[31] But how is she a rival of Aditi ? Whose mother is she ? Indra's hostile attitude towards Uṣā proves that she was not originally the goddess of the Vedic peoples. Her rivalry with Aditi suggests that originally she belonged to a different pantheon. Kosambi concludes that the struggle between Indra and Uṣā is reminiscent of the struggle between two distinct religious ideals in which the Mother-worshipping peoples of the Indus civilization were defeated by the war-lord of a patriarchal pantheon.

Though not conclusive, Kosambi's hypothesis provides us with a new line of approach. In the Vedic pantheon, the concept of a female principle is almost absent, goddesses being negligible in number and insignificant in position. The only exception

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27. *JBBRAS*, xxvii, 19ff.
28. *RV*, iv.30.12-15, 20-22.
29. Wilson's Tr.
30. Cf. *RV*, ii. 15. 6 ; x. 73. 6 ; x. 138. 5.
31. *RV*, i. 113. 19.

is Uṣā, whom Indra, the hero of the male-dominated Vedic pantheon, is represented as attacking and destroying. From the circumstantial evidence it seems that just as the forts of Mohenjodaro were destroyed, so also a need was felt by the male-dominated religion of the Vedic peoples to destroy the female-dominated non-Vedic religion. Accordingly, in the imagination of the Vedic poets, Indra is represented as destroying the cart of Uṣā, and the frightened goddess flees towards the Vipāś.

In fact, the Ṛgvedic Aryans were not sympathetic to the cult of the Mother Goddess. True, there is a 'mother of gods' in the *Ṛgveda*. She is Aditi. In a note on *Ṛgveda*, i.166.12, Max-müller says : "Aditi, an ancient god or goddess, is in reality the earliest name to express the Infinite ; not the Infinite as a long process of abstract reasoning, but the visible Infinite, visible by naked eye, the endless expanse, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky".[32] Some scholars understand the word Aditi primarily as a noun meaning 'nonbinding', 'bondlessness', etc. Roth, for example, has understood the word to mean 'inviolability', 'imperishableness' and so on.[33] But it appears that, in her original form, Aditi was primarily the mother of the gods, the terms like 'infinite, 'bondlessness', etc., having nothing to do with her original conception. In numerous passages of the Vedas Aditi is styled 'mother of gods'.[34] The *Ṛgveda*, vii.25.3 says : "The mother, the great, the holy Aditi, brought forth these twain (Mitra and Varuṇa), the mightly lords of all wealth, that they might exercise divine power". In *Ṛgveda*, vii.47.9, she is invoked thus : "May Aditi defend us, may Aditi grant us protection, she who is the mother of opulent Mitra, of Aryaman, and of the sinless Varuṇa." Even Indra is often designated as an Āditya.[35] Among the Ādityas we come across such great gods as Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Dakṣa, etc.[36] Thus there is no doubt that Aditi was not originally an abstract deity. She was, in fact, mother of the gods. But, as one may naturally expect, being a female member of a patriarchal family of the Vedic gods, it was impossible for Aditi to have a significant position in the pantheon, in spite of the fact that she was their mother. Therefore we do not at all feel surprised when we find this goddess openly flattering Indra.[36] No separate hymn is dedicated to her, and her name is mentioned only 80 times in the *Ṛgveda*.[38] Even the Ṛgvedic poets sometimes hesitate to declare frankly that Aditi was the mother of the gods. In a verse of the *Ṛgveda* we find that the earth sprang from Uttānapad, from the earth earth sprang the regions : Dakṣa sprang from Aditi, and Aditi from Dakṣa.[39] According to Yāska, Aditi aud Dakṣa[40] might have originated from the same source, or derived their substance from each other. In the *Ṛgveda*, Dakṣa is described as one of the Ādityas,[41] and consequently as the son of Aditi. But in the Brāhmaṇa literature Dakṣa is identified with Prajāpati, the Creator.[42] It seems therefore that the Vedic -Aryans, who developed a cattle-raising economy and a patriarchal form of social organisation, were not even willing to give a minimum recognition to this old mother of the gods. In her place they were gradually developing the idea of a male creator which was later crystallized in the form of Dakṣa-Prajāpati. Such a process of ideological transition is found in Semitic religion. In conformity with the transition from mother-right to father-right among the Semites, the progress of things was changing goddesses into gods or placing them beneath the male deities.[43] Aditi did not change her sex, but she was reduced to a minor goddess.

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[32] *TR*, i, 230.

[33] *IN*, 150f.

[34] *RV*, ii.27.1 ; iii.4.11 ; viii.56.11 ; x.36.3 ; x.132.6 ; *AV*, iii.8.2 ; v,1.9 ; viii.9.21 ; xi.1.11 ; *SV*, i.299 ; *Vaj.Sam.*, xxi.5 ; *Nirukta*, iv.22. etc.

[35] *RV*, ii.17.1 ; vii.85.4.

[36] *RV*, i.50.12 ; ii.27.1 ; viii.18.3 ; x.72.8-9 ; *AV*, vii.2.15 ; viii.9.21 ; ix.1.4 ; xiii 2.9 ; *Taitt. Br.*, i.1.9.1 ; *Śat. Br.* iii.1.3.3 ; vi.1.2.8 ; xi.6.3.8 ; etc.

[37] *RV*, v.31.5 ; viii.12.14.

[38] Macdonell, *VM*, 120f.

[39] *RV*, x.72,4.

[40] *Nir*, xi.23.

Indra and the Śiśnadevas

Large number of phallic symbols unearthed from the various sites of Harappa and Mohenjodaro[44] prove what a great part was played in the pre-Vedic agricultural religion of India by the organs of generation. Such cults were probably of no use to the pastoral Ṛgvedic Aryans, and this is perhaps the reason why in so many passages of the *Ṛgveda*[45] Indra is described as the destroyer of the peoples who used to worship *Śiśna* or the phallus. Since the *Śiśna*-worshippers used to live in fortified towns devastated by the war-lord of the Ṛgvedic Aryans,[46] the probablity of their identification with the Harappans cannot be ruled out.

Although the Ṛgvedic Aryans were hostile to the phallic cult, the latter, instead of losing its ground, became a potent factor in the subsequent religious history of India. In popular Hinduism the *liṅga* cult is identical with that of Śiva, and the prototype of the latter is traced in a seal unearthed from Mohenjadaro.[47] The very figure of the male god depicted on the said seal, which may represent the prototype of Śiva, implies that the cult of a male principle did play a role in the matriarchally-determined religious system of the Indus Civilization. The existence of *puruṣa* or male principle is not essentially inconsistent with a matriarchal religion. We find in the later Śākta theology, which is purely matriarchal in nature, that Śiva has some part to play,

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41. *ṚV*, ii.27.1.
42. Cf. *Śat. Br.*, ii.4.4.2.
43. Robertson Smith, *RS*, 52.
44. Marshall, *MIC*, i, 58-63 ; Vats, *EH*, i, 51-56, 368-71ff ; Wheeler, *IC*, 83 ; Childe, *WHH*, 128 ; Piggott, *PI*, 127 ; etc.
45. vii.27.5 ; etc.
46. *ṚV*, x.99.3.
47. Marshall, *MIC*, i, 52-56.

although he is described as the connotative of static existence, and, dissociated with Śakti, he is not better than a corpse.[48] Also in the Sāṅkhya, *prakṛti* is all in all, *puruṣa* being nothing but a passive spectator. The Vedic metaphysical speculations ultimately culminated in the monistic conception of the immaterial *brahman* as the ultimate reality. The dualistic Sāṅkhya conception of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, especially the conception of a material *Prakṛti* as the cause of the universe, has nothing to do with the Vedic conception of an immaterial *Brahman* which was developed in the Upaniṣads and further elaborated in the Vedāntic speculations. In the next section we shall see that the matriarchal religion of the pre-Vedic Indus civilization may be regarded as the source of the dualistic Sāṅkhya philosophy.

The figure depicted on the aforesaid seal is seated in Yogic posture.[49] Similar postures are also found on other seals.[50] In some of the broken statuttes the same Yogic posture is found.[51] All these help us to conclude that the nucleus of the later *yoga-sādhanā* is to be sought in the pre-Vedic religion of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Referring to some statuttes unearthed at Mohenjodaro, R. P. Chanda observed . "The only part of the statuettes that is in fair state of preservation, the bust, is characterised by a stiff erect posture of the head, the neck and the chest, and half-shut eyes looking fixedly at the tip of nose. This posture is not met with in the figure sculptures whether pre-historic or historic, of any people outside India ; but it is very conspicuous in the images worshipped by all Indian sects including the Jainas and the Buddhists, and is known as the posture of the *yogis* or one engaged in practising concentration."[52] A number of scholars previously suggested that the *yoga-sādhanā* originally developed among the non-Vedic peoples of India.[53]

Here also the internal evidence of the Vedic literature supports all the views we are trying to establish in the present chapter. In the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*[54] Indra proclaims : *triśīrṣāṇāṃ tvāstraṃ ahanaṃ aruṇmukhān yatīn sālāvṛkevyaḥ prāyaccham.* He has killed the three-headed son of Tvastṛ ; he has thrown the Yatis before the wolves. Who were these Yatis ? "The only possible answer to this question", writes R. P. Chanda, "is that the *yatis* were not originally priests of the Vedic cult like the Bhṛgus and the Kāṇvas, but of non-Vedic rites practised by the indigenous pre-Aryan population of the Indus Valley. In the legend of the slaughter of the *yatis* by Indra, we probably hear an echo of the conflict between the native priesthood and the intruding Ṛṣis in the protohistoric period. If this interpretation of the legend is correct, it may be asked what was the religious or magico-religious practice of the *yatis* ? In classical Sanskrit *yati* denotes an ascetic. The term is derived froom the root *yat,* to strive, to exert oneself, and is also connected with the root *yam*, to restrain, to subdue, to control. As applied to the priest, etymologically *yati* can only mean a person engaged in religious exercise such as *tapas*, austerities, and *yoga* The marble statuette of Mohenjodaro with head, neck and body quite erect and half-shut eyes fixed on the tip of the nose has the exact posture of one engaged in practising *yoga*. I therefore propose to recognise in these statuettes the images of the *yatis* of the protohistoric and prehistoric Indus Valley. Like the Ṛṣis of the pre-Ṛgvedic and early Ṛgvedic period, these *yatis*, who practised *yoga*, were also primarily magicians."[55]

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[48] Cf. *Saundaryalaharī* i.

[49] Marshall, *MIC*, i, 53-54.

[50] Vats, *EH*, i, 129-30.

[51] Wheeler, *IC*, pl.xvii, A.

[52] *SPCIV*, 25.

[53] Gough, *PU*, 18 ; Garbe in *ERE*, xii, 833 ; Belvalkar and Ranade, *HIP*, ii, 81, 405 ; etc.

[54] iii, 1. One should not fail to recall in this connection that the figure on the Mohenjodaro seal which is supposed to represent a rudimentary form of Śiva is also three-headed.

The story of Indra and the *yatis* is also found in many other Vedic passages.[56] The destruction of the Indus civilization and Indra's slaughter of the *yatis* may not be unconnected facts. On circumstantial evidence it appears that the main features of the pre-Vedic religion of India were the cult of the Mother Goddess, the phallic worship and the practice of Yoga. The original form of *yoga-sādhana*, like those of the cult of Mother Goddess and phallic worship, may be traced to she same fertility magic of the early agriculturists. The three forms are therefore in reciprocal relation, the one being intimately associated with the other. Accordingly we find that Indra is depicted in the *Ṛgveda* as attacking and crushing the ancient Mother Goddess, plundering the fortified towns of the *Śiśnadevas* and throwing the *yatis* before the wolves.

Non-Vedic Origin of Sāṅkhya

In the preceding sections we have seen that the urban character of the pre-Vedic Indus civilization evolved out of an agricultural economy and that a stage of developed agriculture was reached by the Vedic Aryans only after passing through a purely pastoral phase of long duration. We have also remarked that many of the living features of later Hindu religion and philosophy can be traced directly to the pre-Vedic source, and in this connexion referred to the philosophical Sāṅkhya, the practice of Yoga, the cult of the Mother Goddess and many other features. We have also insisted on the point that the pre-Vedic non-Aryan stream is likely to be matriarchal in nature while the other stream represented by the Vedic Aryans is decidedly patriarchal.

Garbe points out that in the *Mahābhārata*, the Sāṅkhya is considered to be as authoritative as the Vedas, and that in the same text Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Pāśupata and

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[55] *SPCIV*, 33.

[56] *Taitt. Sam.*, iii. 3. 7. 3 ; ii. 5. 1. 1 ; *Ait. Br.*, vii. 28 ; *Śat. Br.*, i.2.3.2 ; xii.7.1.1 ; *Pañc. Br.*, xiv.11.28 ; etc.

Pāñcarātra are excluded from the dominion of the Vedas and described as independent branches of knowledge.[57] Reference to the Sāṅknya are found scattered not only in the *Mahābhārata*,[58] but also in the *Caraka Saṃhitā* and the *Manu Smṛti*,[59] while Kauṭilya refers to this system as one of the *ānvīkṣikī vidyās*.[60] Reference to the Sāṅkhya are abudantly found in the Upaniṣads.[61] That the Sāṅkhya was really pre-Buddhist is strongly indicated by circumstantial evidence. Thomas says that Kapilavāstu, the place of Buddha's birth, was designated after Kapila, the traditional founder of the Sāṅkhya system.[62] According to Buddhaghoṣa, the preceptor of the Buddha was a follower of the Sāṅkhya system.[63] That the Sāṅkhya was more or less a popular philosophy in the days of Buddha has been proved by the fact that the doctrines of Pakhudha Kaccāyana and Purāṇa Kassapa have a close bearing on the Sāṅkhya.[64]

But, in spite of numerous references to the Sāṅkhya in ancient literature, we know practically nothing of its original form, since no authoritative Sāṅkhya text is at our disposal. Max-müller refers to a small treatise called *Tattvasamāsa* consisting of only 22 verses as the earliest Sāṅkhya text,[65] but its antiquity is rightly challenged by Keith.[66] The *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, ascribed to Kapila, is also a recent text which cannot be placed before the fifteenth century.[67] Next comes the question of the well-known *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa which is said to have been composed in the second century according to Dasgupta[68] while Garbe and others do not like to place it before the fifth century.[69] But what is found in these texts is nothing but a perverted form of the original system. Dasgupta rightly observes : "The fact that Caraka (78 A.D.) does not refer to the Sāṅkhya as described by Īśvarakṛṣṇa and referred to in other parts of the *Mahābhārata* is a definite proof that Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṅkhya is a later modification, which was either nonexistent in Caraka's time or was not regarded as an authoritative old Sāṅkhya view.[70] Īśvarakṛṣṇa himself says that his ideas are borrowed from an older work called *Saṣṭhītantra*.[71] Reference to this text is also found elsewhere, but the text is yet to be found.[72] Two other texts, bearing on the Sāṅkhya system, *Ātreyatantra* and *Māṭharabhāṣya*, have been referred to by Guṇaratna. We come across such names as

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[57] *ACOPVMCSS*, xx-xxi.

[58] *Śānti P*, 218-19 ; 315-16. cf. Max-Müller, *SSIP*, 227.

[59] Dasgupta, *HIP*, i.213-19.

[60] Kauṭilya, i, 1.

[61] *Kaṭha*, i.3.10-11 ; ii.3.7-8 ; *Śvetāśvatara*, iii.12 ; iv.5 ; iv.10 ; v.2 ; v.7-8 ; vi.13 ; vi.16 ; *Praśna*, iv.8 ; etc.

[62] *LB*, 113.

[63] Sastri, *BD*, 51.

[64] Law, *BS*, 79-80 ; Barua, *HPBIP*, 283.

[65] *SSIP*, 242.

[66] *SS*; 89.

[67] Garbe, *SPB*, pref. x-xi

[68] *HIP*, i, 212.

[69] *ERE*, xi, 189 ; Cf. Hiriyana, *OIP*. 269.

[70] *HIP*, i, 218.

[71] *Kārikā*, lxxii.

[72] Dasgupta, *HIP*, i, 219-20.

Kapila, Āsuri, Pañcaśikha, etc., associated with the authorship of this system, but their works are all lost.[73]

But all these do not help us to find out the original form of the Sāṅkhya system. Therefore we shall have to follow a different method. Any serious and critical student of Indian philosophy must admit that the general trend of the Vedic metaphysical speculations is monistic, since it ultimately culminates into the conception of the immaterial *brahman* as the ultimate reality. Dualism, of course, occurs in some stray passages of the Upaniṣads, but that seems to have originally developed among the non-Aryan inhabitants of India, and later, when the fusion of the two cultures took place, these ideas were incorporated in the Upaniṣads and other texts. As Dasgupta rightly observes : "It seems, however, pretty certain that Śaṅkara's contention that the Sāṅkhya was non-Vedic is right. The apparent references to Sāṅkhya in *Kaṭha* and *Śvetāśvatara* show that these ideas have no organic connection with the general Upaniṣadic scheme of thought."[74] The hypothesis of a non-Vedic authorship of the Sāṅkhya may be substantiated by the fact that (I) the Sāṅkhya conception of *prakṛti* as the material cause of the universe is incompatible with the Vedantic conception of the *brahman*, that (II) greatest care is taken in the *Brahmasūtra* ascribed to Bādarāyaṇa to refute the Sāṅkhya philosophy which is looked upon as the most important challenge to the Vedic system and that (III) there had always been a conscious attempt to revise the Sāṅkhya in the light of the Vedānta.

(I) and (II). *Kapilasya tantrasya vedaviruddhatvaṃ vedānusārimanuvacanaviruddhatvañca*, says Śaṅkara. "Kapila's doctrine not only contradicts the Vedas but also the sayings of those peoples like Manu who follow the Vedic way." Why does Śaṅkara declare the Sāṅkhya to be an anti-Vedic system nnd his enemy number one (*pradhāna-malla*) ? Here lies the answer : *vedāntavākyāni vācakṣānaiḥ samyagdarśanapratipakṣa-bhūtāni sāṅkhyādidarśanāni nirākaraṇiyāniti*. In order to establish the saying of the Vedānta, systems like the Sāṅkhya and others are to be eradicated. The cause is very simple. The Sāṅkhya concept of the female principle as the primordial matter has very little to do with the existing Vedantic notions ; nor it is in any way connected with Śaṅkara's conception of the absolute and reality. Śaṅkara clearly states : "It is impossible to find room in the Vedānta texts for the non-intelligent *pradhāna*, the fiction of the Sāṅkhyas ; because it is not founded on scripture"[75]—*pradhāna* is another name of *prakṛti*. Sāṅkhya is the philosophy of the material first cause, whereas according to the Upaniṣads the first cause is a spiritual principle. In the *Brahmasūtra*, which consists only of 555 *sūtras,* 60 are employed to refute the Sāṅkhya philosophy, and 43 to deal with the other branches of knowledge including Buddhism, Jainism and other philosophical systems.[76] Śaṅkara writes, "Hitherto we have refuted those objections against the Vedānta texts which, based on reasoning, take their stand on the doctrine of *pradhāna* being the cause of the world .. But now some dull-witted person might think that another objection founded on reasoning might be raised against the Vedānta, namely on the grounds of the atomic doctrine. The *sūtrakāra* (the author of the *sūtras*), therefore, extends to the latter objection the refutation of the former, considering that by the conquest of the most dangerous adversary the conquest of the minor enemies is already virtually accomplished."[77]

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[73] *Kārikā*, lxx, *Sūtra*, vi, 69 ; *Śārīrakabhāṣya*, ii.1.1 ; Cf. Colebrooke's *SK*, 157 ; Malalasekera, *DPPN*, 523 ; *SBE*, xiv, 260.

[74] Dasgupta, in *IC*, i, 79-80.

[75] i.1.5 ; *SBE*, xxxiv, 47.

Thus the Sāṅkhya is the 'most dangerous adversary.' Rāmānuja, the most severe critic of Śaṅkara, also agrees with his rival on one point, and the point is that the Sāṅkhya is anti-Vedic.[78] His point of argument is also the same : *Brahman*, the cause of the universe, is nothing but pure consciousness and, therefore, the material *prakṛti* cannot be regarded as the cause of the universe. To quote his own words : "Thinking cannot belong to the non-sentient *pradhāna* ; the term Being (of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* according to which this Being is the cause of the universe) can therefore denote only the all-knowing highest person who is capable of thought."[79] Relics of the original anti-Vedic character of the Sāṅkhya system are also found even in the present form of the Sāṅkhya texts. The grounds of the Sāṅkhya objection to the validity of the Vedas are explained by Gauḍapāda quite elaborately in the *Kārikā.*[80] In a verse of the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* it is stated that the Vedas cannot lead to the *summum bonum*, because the fruits of the Vedic rituals have a beginning and therefore also an end.[81]

Under these circumstances Garbe comments : "Originally the Sāṅkhya must have taken up a position of direct opposition to the doctrine of the *Brāhmaṇas*, as is proved *inter alia* by its polemic against their ceremonial."[82] He also says that "the origin of the Sāṅkhya system appears in the proper light only when we understand that in those regions of India which were little influenced by Brahmanism the first attempt had been made to explain the riddles of the world and of our existence merely by means of reason. For the Sāṅkhya philosophy is, in its essence, not only atheistic *but also inimical to Veda.* All appeal to *Śruti* in the Sāṅkhya texts lying before us are subsequent additions. *We may altogether remove the Vedic elements grafted upon the system, and it will not in the least be affected thereby. The Sāṅkhya philosophy had been originally, and has remained up to the present day, in its real contents, un-Vedic and independent of Brahmanical tradition.*"[83]

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[76] i.1.5-11 ; i.4.1-28 ; ii.1.1-12 ; ii.2.1-10.

[77] *SBE*, xxxiv, 318-19.

[78] *Śrībhāṣya,* i.1.5.

[79] *SBE*, xlviii, 201

[80] See Colebrooke's *SK*, 13.

[81] *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, i, 6.

[82] *ERE*, xi, 189.

[83] *ACOPVMCSS*, xx-xxi Italics added.

(III) In order to prove that the spirit of the Sāṅkhya is fundamentally different from that of Vedānta we should also refer to the fact that the advocates of the Vedānta school wanted to interpret the Sāṅkhya in terms of their own philosophical creed. In fact, having found traces of such attempts in the *Kaṭha*, *Śvetāśvatara* and *Praśna* Upaniṣads, Garbe concludes that there was a deliberate contamination of genuine Sāṅkhya with Upanisadic Vedānta.[84] Jacobi also agrees with Garbe in regarding the 'Epic' Sāṅkhya as a hybrid combination of the classical Sāṅkhya and Vedānta.[85] We have already remarked that the original form of the Sāṅkhya is difficult to determine. Even Vijñānabhikṣu, in his intoduction to the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* says :

kalārkabhakṣitaṃ sāṅkhyaśāstraṃ jñānasudhākaram /
kalāvaśiṣṭaṃ bhūyo'pi purayiṣye vacho'mṛtaiḥ //

He wants to reconstruct the Sāṅkhya, but his real motive is to give it a colour of Vedānta. He himself was a follower of the Vedānta School, and two other commentators on the *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, Aniruddha and Mahādeva, were confirmed Vedantists. As Garbe has shown, a considerable number of verses occuring in the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* are directly taken from the *Brahmasūtra*. In fact the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* is burdened with Vedantic elements.[86]

The chief commentator on the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* is Gauḍapāda. Colebrooke thinks that he is no other than Gauḍapādācārya, the protector of Śaṅkara and the author of the *Māṇḍukyakārikā*.[87] If this identification be correct, this commentator on the *kārikā*, was himself a Vedantists, and it might have been his real intention to give the Sāṅkhya a Vedantic form. The internal evidence of the commentary of Gauḍapāda may also be taken into account. One of the basic postulates of the Sāṅkhya is the conception of the plurality of *puruṣa*.[88] The term *puruṣa* is generally interpreted as the conscious soul and, in the Vedānta, the soul cannot be more than one.[89] Without the trasformation of the original doctrine of the plurality of *puruṣa* into that of the non-duality of the same, the underhand conversion of original Sāṅkhya into disguised Vedānta cannot be complete. Therefore, inorder to reduce the Sāṅkhya into a form of a Vedānta, it is necessary to establish that *puruṣa* is one, and not many, and Gauḍapāda has actually done it : *anekaṃ vyakatamekavyaktaṃ tathā pumāna naoyekaḥ*.[90]

The multiple character of *puruṣa* is certainly in special contradiction to the doctrine of the Vedantists, but nineteenth century scholars were unable to explain this contradiction in terms of a pre-Vedic non-Aryan current of philosophical thought, as distinct from the Vedic current which culminates in the conception of the Vedantic *Brahman*, since they had no idea about the existence of a pre-Vedic civilization in India to which the present form of Hindu religion and philosophy owes so much. But we, fortunately, do not require to lament like Wilson and Colebrooke, nor to pass sleepless nights in the mad quest for suitable passages from the Vedas to prove that the spirit of the Sāṅkhya does not differ essentially from that of the Vedas and the subsequent trend of Vedic thought. We have seen that the anti-Vedic character of the Sāṅkhya philosophy has been stressed by Śaṅkara and other exponents of the Venānta school. Whe have also seen that the Sāṅkhya conception of material *prakṛti* as the cause of the universe has nothing to do with the conception of the immaterial *brahman*, the spiritual principle of the Vedantists, and that by denying the Sāṅkhya conception of the plurality of *puruṣa*, the preachers of the Vedānta school wanted to give a pseudo-Vedantic colour to the original Sāṅkhya. With the discovery of a pre-Vedic civilization in India we are now able to see that the sources of the subsequent philosophical thoughts of India are not all to be found in the Vedas.

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[84] Belvalkar and Ranade, *HIP*, ii. 414.
[85] *Ibid.*, 417.
[86] *SPB*, xi-xii.
[87] Colebrooke's *SK*, pref. vi.
[88] *Kārikā*, xviii.
[89] Cf. Śaṅkara's refutation of the concept of the plurality of *Puruṣa*. *Śārīrakabhāṣya*, ii, 1.
[90] *Sāṅkhyakārikābhāṣya*, xi.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CHANGING PHASES

Historians have more or less subscribed to the myth that the ancient civilization of India was a concrete unity. The past is interpreted as if it was all part of a single cultural trend. All contradictions are smoothed out, and what cannot be fitted into the preconceived mould is simply ignored. It is easy to ignore the inconvinient because the texts themselves, even the oldest, attempted to accomplish the same purpose—to preach the male-dominated outlook. When the practices of the alternative tradition make a rare appearance, it is often for the purpose of abuse. Ingenious explanations were devised to explain away the vestiges of such practices among peoples who were eventually absorbed into the Vedic fold. Even then, the evidences relating to the sexual rituals and their connection with the cult of the mother Goddess could not completely be hushed up, and it is interesting to note that, though, in almost every period, the Vedic literature shows traces of agricultural sexual rituals, and of a pattern of sexual behaviour different from the officially accepted norm, they remain isolated from the mainstream of the Vedic thought. Many rituals of the other traditions which found their way into certain ancient texts, became the visible portion of the Tantric iceberg, the significance of which were denied or distorted by subsequent generations. Thus, the contact, which began in conflict, continued in conflict, because the ideas were reflected in the literature of the dominant class, relatively urbanized and wealthy, while the majority of the population followed the other traditions. That is why I have tried to separate some of the strands of Indian thought from the artificial *synthesis* to which they have been subjected, in an attempt to identify relatively coherent lines of thought, bearing a relationship to economic and social conditions.

Mother Goddess in Pre-Agricultural Societies

The earliest peoples, as we have seen above, were hunters and food gatherers, and in this stage there was no class division, owing to the very low level of production. In the Vedic texts we have references to such peoples, and the post-Vedic literature refers to their cults and beliefs. We have already referred to the passage of the *Harivaṃśa*[1] in which the Mother Goddess is described as worshipped especially by the

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[1] lvix.

Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas, to that of the *Mahābhārata*[2] in which she is described as residing in the Vindhyas and fond of spirituous liquor and flesh and to that of the *Gauḍavaha*[3] in which she is addressed as Śabarī, i.e. Śabara woman. In the *Varāha Purāṇa*,[4] she is addressed as Kirātinī or Kirāta woman. One of her rituals is called *Śābarotsava*, i.e. the festival of Śabaras. Who were these peoples among whom the cult of the Mother Goddess developed especially ?

The *Pañca-kṛṣṭi* of the *Ṛgveda* has been explained by Yāska[5] as *pañca-manuṣya-jātāni*, five classes of men, which included the four varṇas with the Niṣādas as the fifth. Of the eight peoples associated with the Niṣādas, as we find from the Rudrādhyāya of the *Yajurveda*,[6] four (Vrāta, Puñjiṣṭha, Śvanin and Mṛgayu) were decidedhy hunters, while others (Takṣan, Rathakāra, Kulāla, Karmāra) were also tribal peoples who, unable to maintain hemselves by hunting or by other ways of production, had to settle in the Vedic society as members of the lower castes on the basis of some occupation. The working of such a social process can be seen in India even today. It is interesting to note that *ni* means 'down' and *sad* means 'to settle'.

The commentator Mahīdhara explains the word Niṣāda occuring in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*[7] as denoting a Bhilla or Bhil. In the *Mahābhārata*[8] it is stated that the Niṣādas, and also many riteless tribes of the Vindhyan region, sprang from the right thigh of the wicked king Veṇa. In the Purāṇas,[9] the Niṣādas are described as black, low statured, short-armed, having cheek bones, low-tipped nose, red eyes and copper-coloured hair—characteristics still conspicuous among many hill tribes of the present day India. They lived especially on hunting. The Buddhist Jātakas also describe them as hunters and foresters.[10]

The *Padma Purāṇa*[11] mentions the Kirātas, Bhillas, Nāhalakas, Bhramaras, Pulindas and other tribes as descendants of the Niṣādas. In the medieval Sanskrit literature, tribes of the Vindhya hills, belonging to the Niṣāda stock according to the Purāṇas, are called Śabaras, Pulindas and Kirātas. In the *Harsacarita*,[12] we have a beautiful description of the physical characters of a Śabara youth. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*,[13] the Śabaras are described as wild tribes, dependent on hunting, and are classed as Dasyus with the Andhras, Pulindas, Mutibas and Puṇḍras.

The land inhabited by the Śabaras are located to the south of the Vindhyas in Puranic lists of Janapadas. Even today a tribe called Saora is found in the Eastern

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[2] iv.6.

[3] v. 305.

[4] xxviii. 34.

[5] iii.8 ; x.3 ; cf. *Bṛhaddevatā*, vii.69.

[6] For the Vedic references to the Niṣādas see *Taitt. S.*, iv. 5.4.2 ; *Kāṭh. S.*, xvii.13 ; *Mait. S.*, xvi.27 ; *Ait. Br.*, viii.11 ; *Pañc. Br.*, xvi.6.8.

[7] xvi. 27 ; xxx. 8.

[8] xii.59.94-97.

[9] *Viṣṇu*, i.13 ; *Bhāgavata*, iv.14.44.

[10] iv.413 ; v.110.333.

[11] ii.27.42-43.

[12] Tr. Cowell and Thomas, 230.

[13] vii.18 ; cf. *Śāñ. S. S.*, xv.26.6.

Ghats. In the lexicon of Yādavaprakāśa, the Sabaras are counted among the Deccan tribes. Ptolemy[14] locates the Sabarai or the Śabáras to the north of the Vindhyas towards the Ganges, i.e. on the modern road from Rewa to Mirzapur. In the Jain lists of the Janapadas, the Śabaras are described as *mleccha* peoples and their territory is mentioned along with those of the Kirātas, Draviḍas, Pulindras (Pulinda) and others.

Like the Śabaras, the Pulindas were also hunting tribes of the Deccan.[15] Ptolemy[16] refers to them (Poulindai) as Agrophagoi (tribe subsisting on raw flesh, roots and wild fruits). The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[17] mentions the Pulindas along with the Andhras, and both of the tribes are mentioned in an inscription of Aśoka. The *Bṛhat-saṃhitā*[18] refers to them especially as a tribe (Pulinda-gaṇa), while the Purāṇas describe them as foresters.[19] It appears from literary and epigraphic evidence that there were several branches of the Pulindas, viz. a western branch, a Himalayan branch related to the Kirātas and Taṅganas and a southern branch.[20] According to the *Kathāsaritsāgara*,[21] the territory of the Pulindas was situated in the Vindhyas on the route which went from Kosambī to Ujjayinī. It appears that the term Pulinda was later applied to any hunting people. This is supported by the evidence suggested by the Buddhist literature : even the wild tribes of Ceylon like the Veddas were identified with the Pulindas.[22]

The term Kirāta had also a wider denotation. In the Puranic lists of Janapadas, tribes belonging to the Kirāta group are mentioned as dwelling in Udīcya or Uttarāpatha region and also in the Parvatāśraya or the Himalayan region. In the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*[23] they are mentioned as Himalayan mountainers. The *Periplus*[24] refers to the Kirātas (Kirrhadae) living to the north of Dosarene (Tosali in the Puri-Cuttack region) as savages with flattened noses and also the Horse-faced and Long-faced tribes (cf. the Aśvamukha and Dīrghāsya of the Purāṇas) subsisting on raw meats (*puruṣāda*. cf. the term *kravyād*, eaters of raw flesh', of the *Atharvaveda*).[25] Ptolemy locates the Airrhadoi,[26] a Kirāta tribe, living in the coastal region beyond the mouth of the Ganges. He also refers to a country of the Kirātas (Kirrhadia) near the Mount Maiandros. The Andhras, living in the tract between the Krishna and the Godavari, were also hunting tribes mentioned along with the Puṇḍras, Śabaras, Pulindas and Mūtibas in the *Aitareya*

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14. vii.1.80.
15. *Mbh.*, xii.207.42 ; *Matsya Pu.*, cxiv.46-48 ; *Vāyu Pu.*, xlv.48.
16. vi.1.64.
17. vii.18 ; cf. *Sāñ. S. S.*, xv.26.
18. iv.22 ; v.39.77-78 ; ix.17.29.40 ; xvi.2.33.
19. cf. *Mārkaṇḍeya*, lvii.47.
20. *EI*, i.334ff ; iv.40ff ; Pargiter, *MP*, 316, 335, 338.
21. iv.22,
22. Malalasekera, *DPPN*. ii.241.
23. xxx.16 ; cf. *Taitt. Br.*, iii.4.12.1.
24. Sec. lxii.
25. v.25.9.
26. vii.2.2.
27. vii.2.15-16.

Brāhmaṇa.[28] The Mūtibas, also called Mūcipas and Muvīpas, lived in different parts of northern India, while the Puṇḍras or Pauṇḍras in eastern India.

Of the Indian tribes mentioned by Herodotus,[29] the Padaeans were nomads living on raw flesh,[30] while others, inhabiting the marsh countries by the river Indus, subsisted on fish. The Ichthyophagoi or tribes depending upon fish are described by most classical writers.[31] Herodotus also mentioned a few other tribes, though not by name, who were still in the prehunting stage.[32]

In view of what has been stated above, it has now become clear that the ancient hunting tribes of India were scattered in different regions and that the terms Śabara, Pulinda, Kirāta etc. originally denoted the hunting tribes in general. Among these peoples we come across the development of the Mother Goddess cult. The existence of the Mother Goddess cult among the ancient hunting tribes of South Russia and other parts of Europe has also been proved archaeologically.[33] So long we have connected the Mother Goddess especially with agricultural economy. How are we then to explain the existence of it among the pre-agricultural hunting peoples ?

The best answer to this question is given by E. O. James[34] whose arguments we are summing up here : In primitive thought, the woman was not only the symbol of generation, but the actual producer of live. Her organs and attributes were thought to be endowed with generative power, and so they had been the life-giving symbols. In the earliest phases of social evolution, it was this *maternity* that held the field, the life-producing mother being the central figure of religion. With the establishment of husbandry and domestication, the function of the male in the process of generation became more apparent and vital. With the concentration of creative energy in the male principle as the begetter, the Mother Goddess tended to lose her dominance and prestige. The male element was at first introduced as her insignificant lover to play his role as the beggtter, but at length he became the co-equal, and eventually the predominant partner. But where the transition from hunting and food-gathering to higher forms of production was marked by an extensive development of primitive agriculture, the influence of the life-producing mother as the central figure was extended to the vegetable kingdom. Mother Earth thus became the womb in which the crops were sown. She continued her glorious career among the agricultural peoples till the rise of the essentially male-oriented religions. Later on, however, her position declined, due to the changes in the mode of production and the growth of class society, but her cult could not be eradicated completely from the lives of the masses.

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[28] vii.18.

[29] iii.98-101.

[30] cf. The Agriophagoi and Moschophagoi of the *Periplus*, sec. ii, and the Poulindai Agriophagoi (Pulinda) of Ptolemy vii.1.64.

[31] Arrian, *Anab*, vi.28 ; *Ind.*, ii.26-32, Strabo, xv.2.2.14 ; *Dio.Sic.*, xviii.105 ; *Perip.*, 2,20,27,33.

[32] ii.102.

[33] The Venus cult (Palaeolithic female figurines in bone, ivory and stone with the maternal organs grossly exaggerated) came into Europe, according to some scholars, from the east where, in the valley of the Don, numerous examples have been found.

[34] *PR*, passim.

The same was also the process behind the rise and decline of mother-right. In the Fifth Chapter we have seen that in primitive society, due to the uncertainty and insignificance of paternity, it was the females whose maternal functions necessarily placed them in control of the group. Here also with the establishment of pastoral economy a complete change over to father-right took place, but where agriculture predominated over hunting in providing food, the ancient mother-right once again became the driving force of society. But ultimately it declined owing to the changes in the mode of production, though its relics are still found.

In both cases we find a law of negation operating at a certain stage. The primitive pre-class society is negated by class society, in consequence of which the cults and institutions evolving out of the former are also negated by those of the latter. But the residues of the negated remain, and in many cases under different historical conditions these residues pave the way for another negation, in consequence of which a *re-establishment* takes place which, of course, does not mean the restoration of the old original form. There is a qualitative difference between the original and the restored. Thus the pre-Vedic Mother Goddess cult was negated by the Vedic religion, and the latter, in its turn, was also negated by other religious principles like Vaiṣṇavism Śaivism, Buddhism, Jainism, etc. These principles were evidently new in form and content, but they had at their bottom the working of some pre-Vedic ideas. The differences between the original pre-Vedic ideas and their re-established forms are therefore qualitative.

Growth of Class Societies

Even in the *Ṛgveda* we come across passages which refer to a pre-class undifferentiated society. Originally there was a type of communism among the Ṛgvedic deities, said Max-muller, and he coined a term Henotheism to denote that state,[35] but subsequently with the growth of class division among human beings its reflection was seen even in the Vedic pantheon. There are so many passages in the *Ṛgveda* which refer to wealth and cattle as common property and to their equal distribution.[36] In the concluding verses of the *Ṛgveda* unity of mind and determination are desired with a significant statement, *deva bhāgaḥ yathāpūrve saṃjānānā upāsate*, implying that there was once a time when the gods used to sit together and take their respective shares collectively and consciously, which in all probability refers to a lost age when men used to do the same. Even the term *rājan* was originally used in a different sense, not in the sense of a king, because kingship itself was a product of class society. The *rājan* was the first among the equals of the tribe *yo vaḥ senānīrmahato gaṇasya rājā vrātasya prathama vabhūvaḥ.*[37]

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[35] cf. *RV*, i.25.6 ; i.111.2 ; iv.59.2 ; v.84.4 ; vii.72.2 ; etc.

[36] i.24.3 ; i.27.6 ; i.102.4 ; i.141.1 ; ii.14.12 ; iii.2.12 ; vi.66.1 ; vii.52.21 ; vii.76.45 ; etc.

The terms *gaṇa* and *vrāta*, according to Sāyana, denote the same thing, i.e. tribe. In earlier grammatical works, the terms *gaṇa and saṃgha* are used in the sense of tribe.[38] Pāṇini says that *saṃgha* and *gaṇa* are synonymous.[39] In ancient lexicons *gaṇa* and *samūha* are used to denote tribes.[40] In the *Ṛgveda,* there are references to occasional tribal gatherings in the *sabhā* and the *samiti*, the political organisations of society. Thus, here and there in the same text are found relics of an undifferentiated society through which the Vedic tribes passed their hunting and early pastoral stages.

The general character of the *Ṛgveda*, however, refleets a class society based upon pastoral economy. The growth of private ownership in pastoral societies was mare rapid that in the agricultural. Wealth in form of cattle was durable and easy to steal or exchange ; it could be increased by raids and wars. Thus among the higher pastoral tribes developed a type of kingship which was not magical, but military. For successful leadership, the king and his followers received the lions share of the spoils and the wealth thus amassed promoted social inequalities. Warfare is frequently mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*. The Vedic warriors found it hard to vanquish the existing non-Vedic tribes whom they used to call Daitya, Dānava, Asura, Piśāca, Rākṣasa Barbara, etc. The tribes were difficult to conquer because of their internal unity and because of the mercenary character of the state-army. They could only be conquered if their opponents were technically superior. We should remember that during the invasion of Alexander the states were easily overpowered, but it was the tribes who offered stubborn resistance. Mention may be made in this connexion of the Kaliṅga war of Aśoka. Historians have never raised the question why Aśoka did not mention the name of the king of Kaliṅga against whom he won such a decisive victory at the cost of a great mass slaughter which even changed his course of life. Since the inscriptions of Aśoka bear the names of the kings of distant lands, his silence regarding the king of Kaliṅga is really significant. The obvious answer is that the Kaliṅgas were tribes,[41] without any king in the established sense of the term, and this alone explains why there was such a great mass slaughter in Aśoka's conquest of Kaliṅga.

In connexion with Ajātasatru's war with the Vṛjis, the Buddha pointed out the invincibility of the latter with reference to their old tribal customs and institutions.[42] One should not fail to recall that the Buddha was born in an age of transition when the *janapadas* (tribal settlements) were developing into *mahā-janapadas* (bigger confederacies) leading to the rise of organised states. Already four such *mahā-janapadas* became distinguished as states, and the forces behind the subsequent Mahadhan imperialism could be seen. The Buddha was born in a class society. The Śākyas could then reach the higher grades of production as is proved by numerous references to their agricultural wealth. Though they had a separate political entity, they were subordinate to the Kosala kingdom. Many times the Buddha proclaimed himself as a citizen of Kosala. It was indeed difficult for a properous, but class-divided, people like the Śākyas to maintain a dual political entity. So it is not at all surprising that the Kosalan prince Viḍudabha did not hesitate to annihilate them, though his father was a great devotee of the Buddha.

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[37] *RV*, x.34.12.

[38] Patañjali on *Pāṇ*. v.1.19.

[39] iii.3.86.

[40] *JRAS*, 1915, 138 ; *IA*, 1915, 161.

[41] Pāṇini, iv.1.170 ; cf. the Purānic lists of *janapadas*.

[42] Rhys-Davids, *DB*, ii.78.

The real economic cause of the disintegration of tribal society did not escape the notice of the Buddha. So long as the mode of production cannot yield surplus, the integration of tribal society remains intact, but when a revolutionary change in that mode takes place, it also changes the existing social values and relations, giving rise to the growth of a non-productive privileged class. In order to look after the interest of this privileged class, laws are enacted, police and military systems are introduced—in other words, the conception of state becomes materialised. This did not escape the notice of Buddha as is proved by his discourse on the origin of the state.[43] "The Buddha radically departed from the other organisers of monastic groups during or before his times in *making the surviving free tribes of his times the models for his saṃghas*. The *saṃghas* were consciously designed by him to be illusory *substitutes for what was being systematically annihilated in reality*".[44]

Impact of Class Society on Religion

Sacrifice or *Yajña*, as is known to all, was one of the principal features of the Vedic religion. There is a gulf of difference between the original and later forms of sacrifices. Originally the sacrifices were simple rituals, magical rather than propitiatory. "The majority of the sacrificial ceremonies", says Winternitz,[45] "as also the Yajus formulae, do not aim at 'worshipping' the gods, but at compelling them to fulfil the wishes of the sacrificer." Keith also has to admit, in connexion with the sacrifices as described in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature, that "in the vast majority of these cases the nature of the ritual can be solved at once by the application of the concept of sympathetic magic, and this is one of the most obvious and undeniable facts in the whole of the Vedic sacrifice. It is from beginning to end full of magic elements."[46] "In fact, a close examination of the hymns of the *Ṛgveda*," writes Macdonell, actually affords the evidence that even in them the belief in magical powers independently of the gods is to be found...Every page of the *Brāhmaṇas* and of the *Sūtras* shows that the whole sacrificial ceremonial was overgrown with the notion that the sacrifice exercised power over god and, going beyond them, could directly influence things and events without their intervention."[48]

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[43] *DN*, iii.27.

[44] Chattopadhyaya, *L*, 483.

[45] *HIL*, i. 184.

[46] *RPV*, 258-59.

Frazer rightly understood that magic exploits nature by the way of compulsion while religion seeks her help by means of prayer and propitiation, but he did not care to understand that primitive magic was the reflection of pre-class society and that its purpose was economic. It was directly concerned with food gathering or food production. Thomson[49] writes : "The life of savages—pre-class society—is dominated by the struggle against nature, which they are just only beginning to understand and control. Their productive forces are undeveloped, their technique is poor. But of course they are not themselves conscious of this. The deficiencies in technique are supplemented in their minds by magic. Magic is an illusory technique, through which they endeavour to control nature by an arbitrary act of will."

The original purpose of the Vedic sacrifices was also the same. Here we may refer to the Satra, one of the earliest forms of the Vedic sacrifices. Even in the days of the *Atharvaveda* its original purpose was forgotten, because the said text holds it as *utsanna*, i.e. 'gone out of vogue'.[50] One of the important rituals of this Satra was called *mahāvrata* which meant *anna* or food.[51] The main characteristic of the Satra was that it was to be done collectively.[52] This collectivity was the most significant characteristic of primitive magic.[53] "This spirit of collective compulsion," writes Thomson,[54] "corresponds to a stage of society at which the community is still an undivided whole, supreme over each and all of its members, presenting a weak but united front against the hostile world of nature."

Another ancient Vedic sacrifice was called Vājapeya which means 'food and drink'. Though in subsequent ages its purpose was changed, it was originally an agricultural ritual, as Keith points out rightly.[55] The same holds good in the case of the Aśvamedha. So it appears that the original purpose of sacrifice does not differ from magic. Though with the change in the technique of production the pre-class tribal societies disintegrate, magical practices do not die, but their purpose begins to change. Thus in class societies primitive magic transforms itself into the esoteric art of the ruling or privileged class. It survives as a part of religion on its changed and distorted form. "The technique of magic developed by the ruling class as a means of consolidating their privileges by investing them with supernatural sanctions. In this way the working class, being ignorant of the true causes of its subjection, is reconciled to its lot. This is the genesis of religion. Religion is an outgrowth of magic which emerges with class struggle. It is an inverted image of social reality. Just as magic expresses primitive man's weakness in the face of nature, so religion expresses civilised man's weakness in the face of society".[56]

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[48] *ERE*, viii, 312.
[49] *R*, 9.
[50] *AV*, xi, 7.7-8.
[51] *Śat. Br.*, iv.6.4.2 ; Kane. *HD*, ii.1243.
[52] *Śabarabhāṣya* on Jaimini x 6.46-53 ; Keith *RPV*, 290, 349f, Jha, *PMS*, 318f.
[53] Harrison, *AAR*, 36.
[54] *R*, 10.
[55] *VBYS*, cx-cxi.

The deities of *Ṛgveda* were mostly personifications of natural phenomena under which the herders had to live. Even this was a new religion gradually adopted by the hunting tribes coming into pastoral stage. But could they give up the religious practices of their pre-pastoral life? In fact, they could not. They propitiated the deities of pastoral religion with pre-pastoral rituals, of which animal sacrifice was obviously the most important. Two of the Ṛgvedic hymns,[57] later used to be recited in the Aśvamedha sacrifice, show the real nature of the early Vedic rituals. The animal, to be killed, is identified with some deities. It is anointed and then cut to pieces. Its flesh is then cooked and a lump is offered to fire. Then it is eaten up by the participants of the sacrifice in the midst of such utterings as *āghu, yajyā, vaṣaṭkāra.*

In the later and post-Ṛgvedic age in accordance with the change in social life, the gods ceased to be the simple personifications of nature. Many of them went out of sight, and those who survived, could do it only by changing their character. The idea of a supreme god like Prajāpati, as the creator and preserver of the universe, and that of an impersonal creative principle, and some technical terms such as *brahman*, *tapas*, *asat*, etc are met with in the post-Ṛgvedic religion. The simple productive magics of the earlier age, which consisted of performances like the collective eating-rituals enumerated above, became class-oriented. Now we have Grand Sacrifices, sponsored by the rich and the ruling class and conducted by a formidable array of priests, divided into four groups. And with the growth of organised priesthood and mechanical sacerdotalism, the sacrifice of cattle became a senseless source of the destruction of cattle wealth. Cattle had to be killed on numerous occasions, and in the Aśvamedha sacrifice as many as 600 bulls were killed.

The production of surplus prepared the ground for the rise of urban settlements. Trade was facilitated in which cattle served as the best means of exchange. The new condition did not encourage such senselesss destruction of cattle wealth. In the Fourth Chapter (pp. 53-54) we have dealt with the taboo on beef-eating and its economic significance. The Brahmanical religious practices did not suit this new condition. The Brahmanical attitude towards trade was not helpful. The Buddhist and Jain conphasis on non-injury to animals thus assumes a new significance in this context. The *Suttanipāta*[58] states that cattle should be protected for they are the givers of food, beauty and happiness. This was certainly a teaching based upon the growing demands of the traders. In fact, this was the crying demand of the age. Even the Kṣatriya rulers desired to depend more upon the wealth of the traders than upon the magical powers of the Brāhmaṇa priests. The Brahmavidyā (knowledge of the *brahman*) of the Upaniṣads was sponsered not by the Brāhmaṇas but by the Kṣatriyas who held that Brahmanical sacrificial religion was useless.[59] Buddhism gave moral support to all the demands of the trading class. Money-lending, usury and slave-keeping are not condemned in the Buddhist texts.[60]

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[56] Thomson, *R*, 9.

[57] i.162-63.

[58] 296-97, 309.

The Aśvamedha

The pure pastoral economy eventually declined, but a patriarchal social organisation and patrilinear inheritance were retained by the heirs of the Ṛgvedic peoples. These traits are historical realities which can be identified, traced and documented. This male-oriented world view to which we ascribe the term Vedic Culture, stood in opposition to an entirely different cultural complex, a female dominated outlook, inherited from the pre-Vedic Indus civilization with which it was in constant conflict. Clear also that in this tradition that we should seek the origins of the later cults and practices in which the female is the highest principle and in which sexual rituals play an important role.

How the pre-Vedic elements gradually worked their way into the practices of the dominant society, how some of these elements were successfully absorbed while others were never *legitimized* by the sacred texts in spite of their wide prevalence, can be understood if we analyse the character of the ancient rituals found in the Vedic and post-Vedic literature. To illustrate this, here we shall take into account the ceremonial called the Aśvamedha or horse sacrifice. In the Āśvamedhika Parvan of the *Mahābhārata* greater stress is laid on the festive and chivalrous aspects of this royal observance. Though the general outline of the 'internals' of the Aśvamedha, as given in the *Mahābhārata*, corresponds in some cases to the prescriptions of the Brāhmaṇa literature, many items of the ceremonial are altogether ignored, e.g. the *aśva-upaśaṃvesana* of Draupadī. So we shall not be wrong in assuming that, in its earlier stages the performance of the horse-sacrifice must have had connected with it a number of rituals of a purely different character.

The details of the Aśvamedha, as given in the *Śrauta Sutras*[61] convincingly prove that its central ritual was the union of the queen with the horse. This tradition is referred to in one of the later verses attributed to Cārvāka *aśvasyātra hi śiśnaṃ tu patnīgrāhyaṃ prakīrtitam*, which implies that the wife, evidently the queen, had to take the phallus of the horse. This explains why the *aśva-upasaṃvesana* of Draupadī is only mentioned, but not described in the *Mahābhārata*. The writers of the Great Epic regarded it an obscene ritual inconsistent with the ethical principles of their age. However, from the accounts of the horse-sacrifice as given in the *Śrauta Sūtras*, we find that women in general, and queens in particular, had a very important part to play in the function. It was compulsory for the queens to stay in the sacrificial hall, their attendants representing women of different classes coming from different starta of society. On the horse's return to the sacrificial ground, the queens had to conduct everything. When the horse was killed they had to go round it and make a ceremonial mourning. Finally the chief queen had to unite with the dead horse. They had to enter, along with their young female attendants, into an 'obscene abusive dialogue' with the priests.

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[59] See my paper in *MR*, February, 1961. [60] Sharma in *DKCV*, 63.

[61] *Āśv.*, x ; *Āpas.*, xxff ; *Kāt.*, xx ; *Lāṭ.*, ix ; *Śāṅ.*, xvi ; etc.

In describing the ceremonials of the Aśvamedha the *Śrauta Sūtras* have followed the Brāhmaṇa literature closely.[62] In the Brāhmaṇa literature special importance is laid upon the personal rites of the king, the initiation of the horse before its journey by four principal priests, the practice of a Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya lute player singing, morning and night, stanzas composed by themselves, the *pāriplava ākhyāna* related by the Hotṛ, the queen's union with the horse and the 'obscene abusive dialogue'. The last two items are useful for our purpose, and so we are reproducing below the relevant portions of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[63] from Eggeling's translation.

"When the victims have been bound (to the stakes), the Adhvaryu takes the sprinkling water in order to sprinkle the horse. Whilst the sacrificer holds on to him behind, he (in sprinkling the horse) runs rapidly through the formula used at the Soma-sacrifice and then commences the one for the Aśvamedha...A cloth, an upper cloth, and gold, that is what they spread out for the horse...He leads up the four wives ; he thereby has called upon them (to come) and, indeed, also renders them sacrificially pure ..'I will urge the seed-layer (the queen says), let us stretch our feet' (thus in order to secure union)...'In heaven (the Adhvaryu says) ye envelop yourselves.' 'May the vigourous male, the layer of seed, lay seed' (she says in order to secure union)...The Udgātṛ says (concerning the king's favourite wife),

'Raise her upwards...
Even as one taking a burden up a mountain...
And may the centre of her body prosper...
As one winnowing in cool breeze...'[64]

The above is what the Udgātṛ says, but what the Vāvātā (the favourite queen) says in reply is not mentioned here quite intentionally. Fortunately, however, the answer is found in an earlier text, viz. the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*[65] which also relates the

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[62] cf. *Taittirīya*, iii.8ff : *Śatapatha*. xiii.

[63] xiii 2.7ff.

[64] *SBE*, xliv.316ff.

[65] xxiii.22-31.

'obscene abusive dialogues' of other priests and queens. The queen's answer we have already quoted in the third chapter (see page 40) and there is no need of repeating it once again.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* offers an artificial political explanation of the speech of the Udgātṛ. "RAISE HER UPWARDS, the Aśvamedha, doubtless, is that glory, royal power: that glory, royal power, he thus raises for him (the sacrificer upward). EVEN AS ONE TAKING A BURDEN UP A MOUNTAIN, glory (pomp), doubtless is the burden of royal power: that glory, royal power, he thus fastens on him (as a burden); but he also endows him with that glory, royal power. AND MAY THE CENRE OF HER BODY PROSPER, the centre of royal power, doubtless, is glory; glory (prosperity) food he thus lays into the very centre of royal power (or the kingdom). AS ONE WINNOWING IN COOL BREEZE, the cool of royal power, doubtless is security of possession: security of possession he procures for him."[66]

But its real interpretation is found in Uvaṭa's and Mahīdhara's commentary on the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, and we have quoted above (page 40 footnote 56) Chattopadhyaya's translation of the relevant portions of Uvaṭa's commentary from which it appears that the queen is raised up high, and so is the priest, and in that condition they make sexual intercourse, as the ritual demands. From the evidence furnished by the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* it therefore seems that the union of the principal queen with the horse, the earliest elaborate description of which is found in the Brāhmaṇa literature, is a relic, or rather a transformation of an older ritual in which the queen, instead of lying with the horse, had to make sexual intercourse with the priest. In all probablity, the priest had to die after his ceremonial intercourse with the queen, Later on, beasts were supplied as substitutes for men in such rituals, as we find even today articles like the pumpkin becoming substitutes for beasts in non-violent religions.

We have seen that the original purpose of the so-called *yajñas* or sacrifices was connected with the production of food and that the sexual rites involved therein must be explained in terms of agricultural or fertility magic. "The relation of the queen and the horse, according to Oldenberg, is clearly a fertility spell, while the obscene language, he thinks, might be explained in the same sense."[67] But our conclusion is that the dialogue of the priest and the queen, as found in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* in connexion with the Aśvamedha, was meant to be part of a ritual act performed by two characters, and thus was a substitution for an earlier, actual sacrifice. Already in the *Ṛgveda* we have references to such dialogue hymns[68] meant to be performed or mimed before a group of persons assembled for a certain purpose. But still we are to answer a number of questions: If it was originally a fertility magic, why was the queen specially selected

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66. *SBE*, xliv, 324.

67. Keith, *RPV*, 345.

68. i.65; i.179; iii.33; iv.18; x.10; x.14; x.95; x.108; x.135.

for sexual union with the priest ? What are the grounds for supposing that the priest was killed thereafter ? Why and how a collective agricultural ritual became in later times the affair of a king and began to be looked upon as the symbol of royal greatness ? In the third chapter (pp. 41-42) we have already dealt with such questions and pointed out that the killing of the priest or king was originally nothing but an incident in the queen's ritual cycle, as it was necessary for her to conceive in order that the earth might bear fruit. The well-being of the social and natural orders depended upon the vitality of the chief in pre-class society, who must therefore be slain when his powers began to fail him and be replaced by a vigourous successor.[69] Individuals must be sacrificed for the sake of collective welfare. Later on, with the growth of class division such customs began to change. In the earlier phases of class society, so long as the tribal traditions remained powerful, the priests or kings had to dedicate their mortal bodies following the old custom.[70] With further developments in the structure of class society, as is natural to expect, the privileged class did not care to abide by the older rules. Thus, instead of offering their own bodies, they used men from the lower ranks as their substitues. The list of different classes of human victims to be offered in the Puruṣamedha sacrifices, as we find in the Brāhmaṇa literature, proves that such victims could be purchased or managed from the conquered or exploited class.

The New Religious Movements

With the emergence of state-power, when private property became the driving force of society, the old values of tribal life were inevitably destroyed. "The power of these primordial communities had to be broken, and it was broken. But it was broken by influences which from the outset appear to us as a degradation, a fall from the simple moral grandeur of the ancient gentile society. The lowest interests—base greed, brutal sensuality, sordid avarice, selfish plunder of common possessions—usher in the new, civilized society, class society ; the most outrageous means—theft, rape, deceit and treachery—undermine and topple the old, classless, gentile society."[71]

It is against this background that the Buddha's sayings concerning human misery should be read : "I behold the rich in this world, of the goods which they have acquired, in their folly they give nothing to others ; they eagerly heap riches together and further and still further they go in their pursuit of enjoyment. The king, although he may have conquered the kingdoms of the earth, although he may be ruler of all land this side the sea, up to the ocean's shore, would, still insatiate, covet that which is beyond the sea...The princes, who rule kingdoms, rich in treasures and wealth, turn their greed aginst one another, pandering insatiably to their desires. If these acts thus restlessly, swimming in the stream of impermanence, carried along by greed and carnal desire,who then can walk on earth in peace ?"[72]

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[69] Frazer, *DG* ; Hooke, *MR*.

[70] In Malabar region such customs survived even in the sixteenth century. See Barbosa, *DCEAM*, 172ff ; Gopal Panikkar, *MIF*, 120ff.

[71] Engels, *OF*, 147.

Modern scholars, with probably the exceptions of Kosambi[73] and Chattopadhyaya,[74] have so far paid little attention to this feature of Indian history during the Buddha's times and its possible ideological reflections in early Buddhism.

Many of the contemporaries of the Buddha—Gosāla, Ajita, Puraṇa, Pakudha, Sañjaya, etc.—were overwhelmed by the stupendous social transformations and wholesale bloodshed of the times, and their conclusion was that there was nothing to be done about it. The Buddha on the other hand, asked the people to join his *saṃghas*. As is known to all, the constitution of the Buddhist *saṃghas* was ultra-democratic and there was no such thing in the *saṃghas* as private or individual ownership of property. Scholars like Rhys Davids and Oldenberg found it necessary to use the words 'communistic custom' to refer to the rules concerning the role of property within the *saṃgha*.[75] Even Majumdar spoke of the 'communistic theory of property' of early Buddhism.[76] But what is not discussed by them is : Wherefrom did the Buddha get such a theory and why did he lay so much emphasis on it ?

The *saṃghas*, as we have noted above, were modelled on the pattern of tribal democracies and meant to be the ideal substitutes for a vanished way of life. How thoroughly did the Buddha imitate the tribal model has been shown by Chattopadhyaya who, having dealt elaborately with the problems relating to (I) the procedure of entry into the *saṃgha*, (II) the internal administration of the *saṃgha* and (III) the personal or private property within the *saṃgha*, came to the conclusion that "at a critical stage of Indian history, while the free tribes of the times were being ruthlessly exterminated and, within the orbits of the expanding state powers, people were experiencing the rise of new values on the ruins of tribal equality, the Buddha was modelling his *saṃghas* on the basic principles of tribal society and was advising the brethern of his order to mould their lives according to these principles. This point is crucial. In building up his own *saṃghas*, the Buddha could provide the people of his times with the illusion of a lost reality, of the dying tribal collective. And it was only the great genius of the Buddha which could have built this coherent and complete illusion. Not only did he successfully built up his *saṃghas* on the model of the pre-class society, but he took great care to see that the members therein—the *bhikkhus* within the *saṃghas*—lived a perfectly detached life, i.e. detached from the great historic transformation going on in the society at large, *whose course was obviously beyond his power to change.*[77]

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[72] Oldenberg, *B*, 64.

[73] *ISIH*, vi.

[74] *L*, 459ff.

[75] *SBE*, xiii, 18ff.

[76] *CLAI*, 319.

But at the same time the Buddha had to face the dual requirements of his age, and this alone explains why a considerabie number of the contemporary aristocrats formed his front rank associates. Elsewhere we have said that Buddhism had given moral support to the interests of the trading class. The Buddha accepted the new social requirement in which debtors and slaves could not run away from their obligations, animals could no longer be killed indiscriminately and private property could not be appropriated. Ability to pay taxes was considered by the Buddha as one of the five fruits of wealth. In Brahmanical religion the trading class was assigned thc third place in society, but the Buddha's attitude to the caste system raised their social status. Likewise, the Buddha's emphasis on the barrenness of the sacrificial religion saved them from unnecessary expenditure. And at the same time, as we have seen above, he offered to the oppressed peoples of his times a suitable *illusion* of ancient tribal communism which was alread trampled and undermined in *reality*. In fact, the Buddha had to act as an unconscious tool of history and it was not possible for him, though he understood the problem fully well, to change the course of historical transformation and re-establish the pre-class society once again. Class society, in spite of all its ugliness was a historical necessity, and what the Buddha could do under such a condition was to boost up some of its progressive features in public life and to rescue some of the benefical aspects of tribal life in a class society.

Other contemporaries of the Buddha, in all probability, failed to comprehend the meaning of the stupendous social transformations of the age—the collapse of the tribal institutions, the rise of the new values ushered in by the state power and the new forces of injustice and untruth—though they tried to understand the problems in their own way. As is evident from the Jain texts, Mahāvīra and Gosāla (the leader of the Ājīvikas) lived together for many years engaging themselves in ascetic self-mortification, thinking that asceticism might be the remedy of all worldly sufferings. But Gosāla failed to gain anything from it and finally broke away from Mahāvīra. Gosāla, as we know, became a fatalist who was forced to believe that human activity could do nothing to change the course of events. Everything appeared to him to have been determined by the forces of fate or destiny. Though Mahāvīra differed from Gosāla in many respects, the ruthless form of exploitation and misery of his age roused in him a negative feeling similar to that of Gosāla. He believed in action, but the purpose of that action was to get rid of all actions. Every action, according to him, produces *karma*, and thus entails on the doer the continuance of worldly existence. To get rid of all *karma* being the highest goal, what is therefore required is to annihilate the existing *karma* and prevent the formation of new *karma*—technically speaking, to stop the influx (*āśrava*) of *karma*, which is called *saṃvara* or the covering of the channels through which the *karma* finds entrance into the soul.

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[77] *L*, 485. Italics added.

Thus the only purpose of the Jain *saṃgha* was to prevent the formation of new *karma*, while early Buddhism stood for a practical purpose to make the world free form suffering. According to Mahāvīra, when a man is free from passions and acts in strict compliance with the rules of right conduct, the actions thus produced lasts but for a moment, and is then annihilated. As regards the Jain rules of right conduct, Mahāvīra followed his predecessor Pārśva who spoke of four *vratas*—not to kill, not to lie, not to steal and not to be interested in worldly things like property—to which he added a fifth, viz. not to be indulged in sexual intercourse. The four rules of right conduct, prescribed by Pārśva, were simply the moral values of tribal society which were ruthlessly undermined in the age of the Buddha and Mahāvīra.

Gosāla, on the other hand, failed to realise the inevitability of class society, and instead of forming 'ideal substitutes for the vanished realities' he adhered closely to the primitive or tribal tradition, hoping that the golden days would return again. "In the destruction of the Vajjians," writes Chattopadhyaya,[78] "Gosāla saw the doom of everything .. It was thus this great 'storm cloud' that swept away all hopes for humanity as Gosāla understood them. It meant the end of the 'drink', the 'song', the 'dance', the 'reverence' for the elders. We have here the clue to the 'finalities' in Gosāla's delirium: (1) the last drink (*carime pāne*) ; (2) the last song (*carime geye*) ; (3) the last dance (*carime natte*) ; (4) the last greeting (*carime añjalikamme*) and (5) the last great storm-cloud (*carime pakkhala-samvattae mahāmehe*)...And Gosāla, during his last delirium, was himself dancing and singing in the home of the potter-woman Hālāhālā. When he was in such a state, Ayampula, one of his earnest followers, approached him for the clarification of some obscure question. Gosāla's only advice to him was : 'play the *vīnā* old fellow, play the *vīnā*, old fellow'. What could after all a wandering bard advise his follower when the whole world he stood for was falling to pieces before his very eyes ?"

In western India a different type of religious system was evolved—the Bhāgavata or devotional religion—in which the outstanding feature was absolute devotion to one supreme god. Monotheism was the fulfilment of a process that began as early as the days of tribal disintegration. In pre-class societies men had control over the gods ; they believed that they could bring the forces of nature under their control by collective rituals and other performances. In class society, this belief was shattered to pieces ; the gods represented the ruling class, to be pleased only by propitiation and devotion. And monotheism was the logical consequence of this process. In the *Bhagavadgītā*,[79] the ruler or king, whoever he may be, is identified with the supreme god. In such a system, one who goes against the will of the ruler, transgresses the divine law as well. The *Gītā's* fanatical insistence on duty, on submission to one's fate, as ordained by birth, fits in well with this tendency. The concept of duty is advocated to oppose a strictly tribal set of values. Arjuna, the hero, is reluctant to fight because he does not want to kill his kinsmen in the opposing camp. Killing of kinsmen is the supreme tribal taboo, and it is this taboo that the *Gītā's* high-flown arguments are designed to overcome. In this respect, the *Gītā* complements the *Arthaśāstra* by supplying a moral and ethical basis for the destruction of the tribal way of life, while at the same time laying the basis for wider loyalties to class-society. The *Gītā* frankly demands that an individual is bound to work, but he must not desire the fruits of his labour.

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[78] *L*, 523.

[79] *X*, 38.

The Brahmanical religion itself did not remain immune to the social transformation of the time. By the time of the Sūtras, the character of the sacrifice has changed completely. A whole new set of sacrifices had grown up, designed to be performed by the householder alone. The collective nature of the sacrifice was totally lost. It had degenerated into a private superstition. The triumph of the 'house holder' (*gṛhya*) and his property, inevitably carried along with it the stress on the value of celebacy. In early Buddhism and Jainism, it should be remembered, celebacy is also stressed. The emphasis on celebacy should demonstrate finally that sexual restrictions were inherent to the patriarchal tradition, and not to mysticism. The severe prohibitions on sexual relations outside of marriage were due to the overwhelming demand of private property, to make sure of the ancestry of the child. With property is associated the question of inheritance, and herein lies the economic significance of the female chastity which is the contribution of the patriarchal class society.

Among the earlier peoples, as we have seen above, the object of rituals was the increase of production, and in them sex had a major part to play in relation to the Mother Goddess cult. In tribal life, the ceremony of initiation was invariably an introduction to maturity and participation in the sex life.[80] The class society was designed to exclude all these pre-class elements from its structure. Thus in the Brahmanical system, the original purpose of initiation had been distorted beyond all recognition and turned into its opposite. The initiate was surrounded by elaborate prohibitions. He must observe celebacy and avoid women. Even he was not entitled to touch the feet of his teacher's wife. This shows that it was not the act itself, not the spiritual well-being of the Brahmacārin, but the consequences of the act upon the class society that led to such severe prohibitions on sexual relations.

The values introduced by the new religions remained for a long time the driving forces of society, but eventually it was the female principle that triumphed. The agricultural peoples did indeed pay lip-service to the religions preached to them, but they continued to worship their local goddesses. The new religions were accepted because they were part of a higher culture. But they were accepted in form only. The readiness to receive converts from all sections of peoples contributed to the spread of the new religions which, in course of time, rolled up new recruits by absorbing a seemingly endless number of local cults and deities, especially those connected with Tantricism and Mother Goddess. But, by doing so, as is natural to expect, they deviated from the original principles for which they stood.

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[80] See my *IPR*.

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INDEX

Abhāvarti 99
Abhor, Abor 60, 88
Abul Fazl 48
Achillis 78
Adalia 23
Adam 15
Adhara Devī 48
Adhvaryu 125
Aditi 10, 41, 104-7
Adonis 6-8, 11, 13, 24, 38, 39, 42
Aegean 33
Aeschylus 23
Africa 74, 75
Agar, Agari, Agaria 57
Agasa 86
Agdistis 10
Agdos 10
Agnāyī 103
Agonna 75
Agriculture and society 3, 4, 9, 12, 30, 70-75
Agrophagoi 117
Aheria 56, 58, 59
Ahir 56, 89
Ahom 54, 60
Ai Bhavānī 58
Ajātaśatru 120
Ājīvika 129-30
Akka 19
Akkad 47
Alakṣmī 104
Al-Bīrūni 85, 88
Aleutian 96
Algonquin 19
alia-santana 86
Alkmena 78
Allatu 7
Al'ubaid 53
Amazon 74, 80
Ambā 48, 62
Ambābāi 29
Ambattan 86
Ambikā 10, 48, 86, 104
Amma 62
amma champaltu 83
Ampalavasi 86
Anahit 19
Anaitis 13, 19, 37, 52
Ancus Martius 79
Andhra 116-17
Angalamman 50
Aṅgārmati 57
Aniruddha 114
Annamma 50
Annapūrṇā 57
Annuit 47
Aparājitā 46
Āpas 104
Aphrodite 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 37. 38, 52
Apollo 78
Apuleius 12
Apyā Yoṣā 104
Arabian Women 77
Aralu 7
Aramazd 19
Araṇyānī 103
Āraṭṭa 84, 87, 90, 100, 101
Arbuda Mātā 48
Aretophoria 4
Aristotle 16
Arjuna 80, 90, 131
Armenia 13, 19, 37
Arrian 73, 81
Artemis 10, 11, 19, 44, 51-53, 75
Artemisia 78
Aruṇākṣa 63
Aruva 55
Āryā 46
Aryan invasion 98-103
Āśā 46
Āśāpurṇā 59
Ashanti 75
Ashmolean museum 20

Ashtarte, Astarte 5, 6, 13, 23, 38, 53,
Ashtorath, Astaroth 6, 13
Asia Minor 5, 6, 20, 23, 37, 73
Aśoka 117, 120
Assyria 4, 12, 13, 18, 100
Asura 99-101, 120
Asura marriage 89, 90, 100
Āsuri 100, 111
Aśvamedha 42, 122-27
Aśvamukha 117
Aśvin 87
Aśvinī 103
Atargatis 13, 52
Atari 49
Athena 10, 78
Athens 8, 21, 78-79
Ati 13
Atossa 77
Attis 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 24, 36, 38, 52
Augustine 12, 78
Augustus 11
Aurelia Aemilia 38
Aztecs 19

Baal 5
Baalbec 37
Babylon 4, 7, 13, 37, 47
Bachofen 65-68, 74, 95
Badaga 85
Bādarāyaṇa 111
Baḍimātā 49
Badwa 50
Bagada 88
Baganda 74
Bagchi 97
Bagdi 58
Bagia priest 30, 57
Bāhīka 84, 87, 90, 100, 101
Bahucharaji 59
Baidaro 55
Balija 84
Bamsi 55
Bāṇabhaṭṭa 54
Banajiga 84
Bandelier 69
Banerji-Sastri 100
Banhi 57
Bania 85
Bansgopal 57
Bant 86
Banyankole 75
Banyoro 75
Barbara 58, 116, 120
Bari 88
Baroda 59
Bau Mother 47
Bawariya 59
Bechraji 59
Bedia, Bediya 57, 85
Belgium 33
Belitsheri 45
Bellerophon 78
Bel Marduk 4
Belvalkar 93
Bendkar 55
Benin 74-75
Bensuri 55
Beria 85
Bernal 5
Bestha 86
Bhadrakālī 63, 104
Bhadralakṣmī 31
bhaga 41
Bhāgavata religion 130
Bhagavatī 16, 53, 54
Bhaga-yāga 40
Bhainsāsuri 52
Bhairavī 62
Bhandarkar 85, 96
Bhārati 104
Bharcandi 53
Bhaṭṭakārikā Berembā 55
Bhavānī 58, 59, 104
Bhil, Bhīlla 59, 116
Bhīma 90
Bhīmādevī 63
Bhirani 52
Bhīṣma 89
Bhondari 55, 84
Bhramara 116
Bhramarāmbā 63
Bhramaravāsinī 63
Bhrāmarī 52, 63
Bhū 24
Bhuiya 30, 35, 57, 88

Bhujaṅgajananī 52
Bhujaria 29
Bhunjia 54, 84
Bhūmi 25, 63
Bihu festival 35
Billava 86
Bind 30
Biror 57
Bisal-mari 50
Black Annis 22
Black Sea 37
Boeotia 36
Boghaz-keui 52
Bombai Mātā 49
Bonthuk 84
Bosantiya 55
Bose 96
Brahmā 6, 46
brahman 96, 108
Brahmāṇī 32
Brahmapura 80
Brahmavidyā 124
Bran 79
Bṛhadratha 45
Bṛhaspati 41
Briffault 15-17, 36, 67, 68
Briseai 4
Buddha 45, 120, 121, 127-29
Buddhaghoṣa 110
Bugi 96
Buriā-māi 57
Butler 79

Caitralakṣmī 31
Californian tribes 96
Caligula 12
Cāmuṇḍā 32, 55, 63
Caṇḍa 57, 63
Caṇḍakauśika 45
Caṇḍālī 96
Caṇḍeśvaramma 50
Caṇḍī, Caṇḍikā 49, 54-58, 62-63
Canute 79
Cayamāna 99
Cappadocian goddess 51, 52
Caraka 110
Carib 19
Cārudatta 56
Cārvāka 124
Caryā songs 95-96
Cedi 47
Celebacy 131
Celt 18, 79
Cemetery H. 98-99
Centeotle 19
Central America 36
Ceremonial promiscuity 6
Ceres 12, 28, 30, 31
Chakkyar 86
Chakladar 80
Chaliyan 86
Chamar 46, 58, 84, 88
Chanda 5, 6, 73, 98, 108
Chanhu-daro 22
Chānd Sadāgar 92
Chathi 46
Chattopadhyaya 40, 42, 69, 71, 72, 73, 100, 126-30
Chauhan Gujar 85
Chāyā 24
Cherry 24
Cheruman 84, 86, 88
Chetti 86
Childe 98
Child marriage 72
Chili 36
China 19, 74
Chutiya 54
Citrāṅgadā 90
Claudia Quinta 20
Colebrooke 113-14
Comana 13, 24
Comanch 19
Conatlicue 19
Congolese 96
Connela 79
Constantine 37
Corinth 37
Corn Mother 10-12, 30, 31, 38, 44
Crooke 35
Crete 11, 20, 36
Cuchulainn 79
Cunningham 47, 48, 52, 59
Cupid 35
Cybele 10, 13, 20, 38, 51, 64
Cyprus 37, 38

Dabhīti 105
Dahomi 75
Daitya 99, 120
Dākātiyā Kālī 55
Dākinī 97
Daknai 57
Dakṣa-Prajāpati 106-7
Dakṣinācāra 96
Dalton, 35-36, 55-61
Damkina 15
Dānava 99, 120
Dandasi 55, 84
Danteśvarī 58
Danu 18
Darius 77
Darwin 69
Dasgupta 100, 110-11
Dasyu 116
Demeter 4, 10-12, 19-21, 25, 31, 33, 36, 38, 53
Democritus 15
Demophone 20
Demos 4
Deoharin 57
Deoris 54
Derceto 13
Desauli 56
Deukalion 78
Devasena 46
Devī 6, 21, 28, 37
Devī Dāi 26
Dhākeśvarī 48
Dhamrai 55
Dharaṇī 24
Dharmamāṇikya 47
Dharti Mātā 57-58
Dhelāi Caṇḍī 46, 49
Dhodia 50
Diana 11, 44, 75-76
Dianus 75-76
Didi Thākrun 49
Diodorus Siculus 11
Dionysus 4, 10, 12, 78
Dīrghāsya 117
Dirghatamas 87
Disāi Devī 53
Diti 103
Divodās 105
Dofla 88
Dombi 96
Don 18
Dosarene 117
Draupadī 87-91, 124-25
Draviḍa 117
Dudhā-māi 57
Dumuzi 7
Durgā 10, 30-32, 37, 42, 47, 52-57, 61-64, 92, 104
Durgama 63
Durgī 104
Duryodhana 91
Dyaus 11

Ea 7, 13
Earth Goddess 4, 11, 13, 19, 25-28, 44
Eastern Women's country 80
Eggeling 125
Egypt 4-9, 11, 12, 22, 28, 33, 53, 73
Egyptian figurines 17
Egyptian women 77
Ehrenfels 49, 66, 71-73, 87
Ekanaṃsā 63
Ekavīrā 63
Elam 77
Eleusiana 20-23
Engels 69, 127
Ephesus 11, 44
Erech 47
Esthonian religion 19
Ethelred 79
Etruscan 79
Euphrates 8, 53
Eusebius 37
Euyak 52
Evans 61

Fand 79
Father-right 5, 13
Farnell 38, 47
Feng 79
Female principle 13, 14, 95
Fertility rites 3, 4, 16, 94
Finn mythology 19
Fison 69
Flaminica 75

Frazer 5, 15, 21, 29, 36, 38, 41, 44, 47, 74, 96, 122
Frija 18
Functional School 70, 83

Gaea, Gaia 10, 11, 53
Gaelic pantheon 18
Gālava 87
Gaṇa 53, 120
Gandhamādana 62
Gandhāra 101
Gāndhārī 45. 89, 91
Gandharvī 104
Gaṅgadikara Okkalu 84
Ganiga 84
Gansam 57
Garbe 94, 109, 112, 113
Garden of Adonis 28, 29
Garo 30, 61, 82
Gauḍa 86
Gauḍapāda 112, 113
Gaurī 28, 52, 59, 63
Gautamīputra 85
Gayeśvarī 48
Ghosh 100
Gīrīja 61
Glotz 44
Goddesses in the Vedas 103-107
Goldenweiser 67
Golla country 84, 87
Goonal-māi 50
Gond 58, 84.
Gosāla 128-30
Gowari 58, 84, 88
Graebner 66, 72
Grāmadevatā 55, 91
Great Mother 13, 30
Greece 6, 11. 28, 36-38
Ground Mother 30
Gujar 88, 89
Gulsaila-mātā 49
Guṇaratna 95, 110
Guṅgu 103
Gurukkal 86
Gusain Era 58

Haddi 55
Hades 79, 20
Haimavatī 61
Halaba 84, 85
Halicarnassus 4, 10
Halikar Okkaliga 84
Hall 73, 77
Haloa 4
Hamlet 79
Hannibal 20
Hanuman 57
Harappa 8, 9, 21, 22, 25, 34, 98, 100, 101-3, 107, 108
Hariārī Devī 26, 30.
Hārītī 45
Hariyupīyā 99
harlots 11
Harrison 26
Hartland 66
Harvest 28, 30
Hathi Bhawani 52
Hathor 53
Hekatomnos 78
Helava 86
Heliopolis 37
Hellas 37
Henotheism 119
Hera 44
Heracles 78, 81
Hermes 33
Herodotus 12, 12, 37, 77, 78, 86, 118
Hesiod 11
Hiḍimbā 90
Hierapolis 13, 52
Hittites 13
Hiuen Tsang 80
Ho 35
Holeya 84, 86
Holi 35
Horatio Hale 67
Horus 6
Hotṛ 125
Howitt 69
Huliamma 52
Huron 67
Hygd 79
Hygelac 79
Hypergamy 72

Ibbetson 88
Ibn Batuta 77
Ichthyophagoi 118
Idaean mother 20
Idiga 84
iing 82
Ilā 104
Inanna 7, 47
Inca 74
Indirā 24, 63
Indra 41, 61, 98, 99, 104, 108, 109
Indrāṇī 103
Iroquois 9, 67, 84
Īśā 28
Īśāṇī 28
Ishtar 7, 12, 13, 19, 38, 42-45, 47, 52
Isis 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 28, 38, 42, 45, 53
Īśvara 28
Īśvarakṛṣṇa 95, 110
Itu 29, 31

Jacob 77, 85
Jadam 88
Jahir Era 56
Jainism 129-30
Jālandhara 47
Jalari 84
Jalpa Devī 48
James 118-19
Janasthāna 63
Jarā 47
Jarāsandha 45
Jaṭilā 87
Jayadurgā 55
Jayi 29
Jhakra Burhi 56
Jīmutavāhana 54
Jogi 84, 88
Jordh 8
Jupiter 75
Juno 44, 75, 76
Jvālā Devī 48
Jvālāmukhī 48, 57-58

Kachari 55
Kadir 84
Kaikari 85
Kaikeyi 89
Kākī 46
Kalāi caṇḍī 49
Kālaketu 53
Kālarātri 62, 63
Kalasi 86
Kālī, Kālikā 21, 31, 32, 52, 54, 55, 57, 58, 62, 63, 104.
Kaliamman 30
Kāijai 55
Kaliṅga war 120
Kallan 86, 88
Kalumaiamman 50
Kāma 35
Kāmākhyā 16, 54, 56
Kāmākṣī 56
Kamalā 52, 63
Kamar 84
Kāmarūpa 54
Kambyses 77
Kāñcī 56
Kanha 96
Kaniyan 88
Kankar Mātā 49
Kannuvan 86
Kantaberian 78
Kanyākumārī 104
Kapila 95, 100, 110-11
Kapileśvarī 48
Kappilion 88
Kapu 88
Karia 78
Karku 88
Karmāra 116
Karṇa-Śalya discourse 90
Karnaven 83
Karṇimātā 48
Kārttikeya 39, 45, 46
Kārttikī 32
Kaśypa 46
Kātyāyanī 54, 55, 104
Kaurava 45
Kauśikī 58, 62, 63
Kauṭilya 25, 110
Kautsky 69
Kavati 86
Kawar 59

Keith 121, 122
Kekrops 78
Kel-mari 50
Kesai Khati 54
Khaḍa 49
Khamti 60
Khar-pūjā 26
Kharwar 57
Khasa 101
Khasi 60, 61, 74, 75, 81-83
Khermātā 50
Khimal-mātā 48
Khand 52, 88
Kicakeśvarī 48
Kilekyata 84
Kilu Deli 60
Kirāta 116-18
Kirātini 116
Kirrhadia 117
Knossos 10, 61
Koch 55
Kojāgarī-Lakṣmī 31
Kokklamma 50
Kol 30, 54
Kola 36, 62
Kaliyan 87
Komati 84
Koracha 84
Koraga 86
Kore Persephone 4, 11, 12
Kosala 56, 121
Kosambi 41, 43, 56, 104, 105, 128
Kotaru 55
Kottai Vellala 86
Krige 65
Krishnavakkar 86
Kronos 11
Kudan 86
Kuduni 86
Kudiya 86
Kuhū 46, 103
Kulāi caṇḍi 49
Kulakuṇḍalinī 95
Kulācāra 6
Kulāla 116
Kulitara 105
Kulli culture 22
Kumārī Pūjā 95
Kumbara 84, 86
Kunti 91
Kupola's festival 30
Kur 82
Kurava 86
Kurukal 86
Kurmi 85
Kusumapura 54

Laban 77, 85
Laconia 4
Lactantius 15, 38
Lagash 13, 47
Lakhubāi 29
Lākinī 95, 97
Lakṣmī 29, 31, 32, 46, 63, 103
Lāmā 97
Lāmāvarga 97
Lāṅgā 55
Lāṅgala 80
Laṅkā 47
Latā-sādhanā 40
Latuka 75
Lengbin 60
Lengdin 60
Leto 78
Livingstone 75
Livy 20
Lohasur Devī 57
Lowie 70
Lucretius 16
Ludi Megalenses 10
Lunda 74
Lushai 60
Lykian 5, 77-78
Lyngdoh 76
Lynngam 82

Ma 13, 24, 62
Macandrī 26
Mac Culloch 79
Macdonell 121-22
Mādhavī 24, 87
Madhva 92
Madiga 84, 86
Madraka 87, 90, 100-1

Mādrī 89, 90, 100
Magadha 45, 47
Magana Mater 11
Magh Porai 35
Mahādeva 28, 113
Mahādevī 6
Mahālakṣmī 62
mahari 82
Mahāvīra 129-30
Mahīdhara 116, 126
Maibee 61
Maine 66
Maize-mother 19
Majhwar 57
Majumdar 128
Makaranḍaka 58
Mal 57, 58
Mala 94
Malabar 16
Malayarayan 86
Mali 84, 86
Mālinī 46
Malinowski 68, 70
Malta 22
Mama or Mamitu 13
Mamaccoya 74
Mama Devī 59
Mama Pacha 19
Manasā 52, 57, 92
Mandaravāsinī 61
Mang 85
Maṅgalā 62
Manhardt 38
Manipura 35, 61
Mannan 86, 88
Manu 10, 16, 34, 111
Mappila 86
Maramma 50
Maravan 84, 86
Mārī 49, 50
Mariamma 49-51
Mārī Bhavānī 49
Marshall 22, 73
Marut 87, 102
Marx 70
Mātā 59
Mātā Devī 58
Matamaṅgara 27
Mātā Masānī 49
Matriarchal conditions 14, 92-94
Matriliny 5, 68, 70-71, 81-86
Matrilocal marriage 70, 86-89
Maw Kynthei 61
Maw-synram 76
Max-müller 106, 110, 119
Mayeśvaramma 50
McLennan 65, 66
Medinī 24
Mediterranean 6
Megasthenes 81
Melanesia 84
menarikam 84
Mesopotamia 7, 22
Mespero 77
Mesukkumik Okwi 19
Mexico 19
Micronesia 9
Midsummer Eve 29
Mikir 60
Minoan Crete 6, 20, 63
Miri 60, 88
Mitra 106
Mogul Ghundai 22
Mohenjodaro 6, 8, 9, 17, 22, 23, 34, 98, 101-3, 107-8
Mondaru 84
Morgan 66, 67, 69
Mother Earth 3, 8, 12, 15-24, 33, 34, 93, 94
Mother-kin 5, 73
Mother-right 5, 19, 65-97
Moti Mātā 49
Mount Eryx 11
Muchak Rāṇī 57
Mūcipa 118
Muduvar 88
Muka-dora 84
Mukkuvan 86
Munda 28, 56 57, 63, 86
Murray 79
Musahar 57
Musquaki 36

Muth-lakṣmī 31
Mutiba 116-118
Muvīpa 118
Mylitta 37, 38
Mysian 78

Nāga 35, 99
Nāgārjunikoṇḍa 42
Nāgavalī 50
Nāhalaka 116
Nairāmani 96
Namboodri Brahmins 86
Nana, Nanaia 47, 52
Nandā 58, 62
Nangudi Vellala 86
Narakāsura 24
Nārāyaṇī 62
Natesa Sastri 35
Nattuvan 86
Navadurgā 32
Navānna-lakṣmī 31
Navapatrikā 31, 32, 42
Navarātra 29, 30, 43
Nayadi 88
Nayar 27, 83, 88
Nehalennia 18
Neith 53
Nepthys 45
Nerthus 18
Newar 81
Nīlā 63
Nīlakaṇṭha 63, 86
Nimbārka 92
Nina 13, 47
Ninevh 12, 47
Nin-khursag 53
Ninlil 47
Ninus 13
Niṛṛti 104
Niṣāda 116
Niṣṭigṛ 104
Norse mythology 18
North America 9
Nudity in ritnal 26, 27
Nukalamma 50
Nu-Wang 80

Odin 18
Odysseus 79
Oisis 79
Olāi-caṇḍī 49
Oldenberg 126, 128
Olympia 4, 11, 20
Ommo 62
Oraon 25, 28, 30, 56, 85
Oṣadhi 103
Osiris 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 24, 42, 86

Padaean 118
Padmāvatī 29, 52
Pakudha Kaccāyana 116, 128
Palālā 46
Pallan 86
Pallamma 50
Paltia Bhils 50
Pañca-khaṇḍā 55
Pañca-Kṛṣṭi 116
Pāñcarātra 110
Pañcaśikha 111
Pandaia 81
Pāṇḍavas 87, 90, 91
Pāṇḍya country 81, 91
Paṇi 98
Pansahi-mātā 44
Paraśurāma 51, 86-88
Paravan 86
Parayan 27, 53, 84, 86
Pariah 51
Pārvatī 16, 28, 29, 54, 59-63
Pāśupata religion 109
Patnā Devī 48
Patriarchy 5, 14, 78
Pattaria 86
Pauṣalakṣmī 31
Pausanias 10, 21, 24, 33
Peddamma 50
Pellene 4
Periano Ghundai 22
Persephone 8, 12, 20, 25, 31, 36
Peru, Peruvian 19, 25, 30, 36
Pessinus 10, 20, 24
Petrie 77
Phidias 31
Phigalia 21, 22

Phoenicia 6, 13
Phrygia 5, 6, 10, 13
Phulmātā 49
Piggott 22, 99
Piśāca 120
Pliny 13, 16
Pluto 20, 21, 25
Polybius 78
Polyandry 87-89
Pontus 13, 24
Poseidon 8, 78
Paulindai 117
Powell 69
Prajāpati 104
Prajñā, initiation with 97
Prakṛti 6, 14, 46, 92-95, 108-14
Pramīlā 80
Prāsahā 103
Prasthala 101
Praxiteles 31
Priapus 33
Priyavrata 46
Priestess 74
Pṛthivī 8, 11, 24, 41
Ptolemy 117
Pueblo Indians 9, 61, 84
Pulayan 84, 86, 88
Pulinda 58, 116-118
Puṇḍra 116, 118
Punja 36
Puñjiṣṭha 116
Puraṇa Kassapa 110, 128
Purūravā 41, 42
Puruṣa 6, 14, 92-95, 107-114

Queen-rulers 73, 75, 81

Ra 4
Radcliffe Brown 68, 70
Rain magic 26-29
Rajjhar 85
Rākā 103
Rakṣākālī 56
Rakṣasī Jarā 45
Raktacāmuṇḍā 63
Raktadantikā 17, 32, 63
Rānade 93
Ratzel 72
Renukā 51
Reddi 88
Rhea 6, 7, 10, 11, 51, 52
Rhys Davids 128
Rice Mother 30
Rituals 3, 7, 25, 28, 31, 33
Robertson Smith 77
Rodasī 87, 103
Rohimi Rokemi 30
Rudra 86, 104
Rudrāṇī 104

Śabara 54, 58, 116-18
Sabitunae 75
Sacrifice and magic 121-123, 131
Sodaru 84
Sadvṛtti 46
Sahajiyā 96
Sahajasundarī 96
Sahri Bahlol 45
Sailaputrī 61
Sailasutā 61
Saiva philoshophers 92
Śākambharī 21, 22, 25, 59, 62, 63
Śāktism 5, 6, 13, 31, 63, 95, 97, 107
Śalya 89, 100
Samantan 86
Sambandham 83
Sambara 105
Saṃgha 120, 121, 128, 130
Saning Sari 30
Sañjaya 128,
Śaṅkara 56, 94-95, 111, 114
Sāṅkhya Philosophy 13, 14, 73, 92-95, 100-114
Sansi, Sansiya, 50, 58, 59
Santal 38, 58, 85
Saora 57, 116
Saramā 104
Saraṇyu 104
Sarasvatī 39, 104
Sarna Burhi 56
Sarpedon 78
Sarvāṇī 104
Saṣṭhī 39, 45, 46
Śatākṣī 63
Sati 63

Satra 122
Saturnalia 28
Sauvīra 101
Śavarī 96
Savitṛ 41
Sāyaṇa 99, 105, 120
Schmidt 66, 72
Sedhulal 49
Semele 78
Semiramis 13, 73
Seri Indians 67
Shaod Mātā 26
Sīhasīvali 87
Siṃhavāhinī 51, 58
Sindhu-Sauvīra 87, 101
Sinīvālī 46, 103
Śiśnadeva 107-9
Sītā 24, 25, 87
Śītalā 49, 57, 59
Śiva 6, 11, 29, 51, 52, 56, 62, 96, 104
Śivā 32
Sky god 3, 7, 11, 18, 19, 23
Skanda 45, 46
Śokarahitā 32
Spenta Armaiti 19
Śraddhā 103
Śrī 24, 63, 103
Strīrājya 80, 81, 89, 90
Starbuck 4
Strabo 24, 38
Subandhu 54
Śūdraka 56
Su-fa-la-na-kin-ta-lo 80
Sukhajamme 49, 50
Sukhapradā 46
Su-mu 74, 100
Sunkalamma 49
Sūryā 87, 104
Svetaketu 87
Synteng 82
Syria 5, 6, 13, 37

Tacitus 80
Tammuz 6, 7, 11, 13, 38, 42, 45
Tantricism 17, 34, 37, 73, 81, 92, 94-97, 132
Taoism 19
Tārā 21
Terra Mater 18
Tertullian 12
Teshub 51
Teutons 8, 79
Ṭhākurāṇī 29, 55, 57
Tharu 53
Thesmophoria 4, 33, 36
Thetis 78
Thomson 17, 18, 42, 71, 122
Thor 8, 18
Tiamat 12
Tibetan polyandry 88
Tigara 84
Tiyan 86
Tonacajohua 19
Toreya 84
Tottiyan 84
Tripura Devī 47
Tripuramālinī 47
Tripuranāśinī 47
Tripurasundarī 47, 96
Tuatha De Dannan 18, 19
Tuturia Mother 59

Udalamma 50
Udgātṛ 39-41, 125
Uddālaka 87
Ugracaṇḍā 63
Ujjayini Devī 48
Ulladon 86
Umā 10, 61, 62, 63, 104
Unni 86
Uppara 84
Uramma 49
Uranus 11
Urvaśī 41, 91
Uṣā 10, 104-6
Uṣabha 87
Utsava-saṅketa 87
Uttānapad 106
Uvaṭa 40, 126

Vaghai Devī 52
Vaimiṭrā 46
Vairocaṇī 104
Vaiṣṇavī 24

Vājapeya 40, 122
Vāk 104
Vākpati 54
Vālmīki 25, 92
vāmācāra 6, 40, 96
Vanadurgā 46, 55
Vannan 86
Varaśikha 99
Varuṇānī 95, 103
Vasana Caṇḍī 49
Vāsantī 28, 35
Vasumatī 24
Vātsyāyana 80
Vāvātā 39-41, 125
Vedānta 92-94, 108, 111
Vedda 117
Vegetation ritual 38
Veṇa 116
Vergil 11, 15
Venus 11, 17, 37, 38, 42, 118
Vetāla 58
Vidyā 97
Vindhyavāsinī 54-56, 61
Vipracitti 63
Virgin goddess 6
Viṣahari 52
Viśākha 45-46
Viṣṇu 6, 25, 96
Viṣḍumāyā 62
Vṛcīvan 99
Vṛji 120
Vṛnhilā 46
Vṛtra 101-4

Westermarck 67-70
Western Women's Country 80
Wheeler 99
Wilson 114
Winternitz 121

Xerxes 78

Yādavaprakāśa 117
Yakṣī 45
Yama 86
Yamī 86
yantra 41, 42
Yāska 106, 116
Yaśoreśvarī 48
Yati 104
Yeerangeremman 50
Yellamma 51
Yin 19
Yoga 108, 109
Yogonidrā 63
Yogeśvarī 63
Yoginī 96, 97
Yaśodā 63

Zarpaint 47
Zebid 77
Zeus 6, 7, 8, 20, 21, 23, 38, 86
Zhob 22

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